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Gertrude Ellerslie.

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FOR

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GERTRUDE ELLERSLIE

A Story of Two Years

BY

MRS. MELDRUM

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

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'A life is measured not by years,
So many or so few,
But by the truth it strives to reach,
The good it tries to do.'

GERTRUDE.

CHAPTER I.

'By fits, moreover, hide them as we may,
It frets us all, this tedious every day;
A longing throb, a germ of bold romance,
Is deep in every bosom; thirst for chance
And change.'

'I have immortal longings in me.'

ELL, Gerty?'

'Well?'

'What—does—your'—

'Oh, you needn't ask! What's the use of wasting words? What do you want?'

The young man thus addressed felt snubbed severely; but then he was used to it,—from his cousin Gertrude, at least,—so he meekly said:

'Are you to go abroad?'

'Of course not, Bruce; whoever thought I was?'

A gleam of ill-concealed satisfaction lit up Bruce's pale face, as he tried, however, to mutter something like condolence for his cousin's disappointment; but Gertrude swept down upon him like an eagle upon a fluttering bird, exclaiming:

'You do look sorry for me, truly! All the same, you have a queer way of showing it, sitting grinning there! What *do* you

want? You have the oddest way, Bruce, of turning up at the most inconvenient times. I am nearly stupid with a headache, brought on—by—by—the cold, I suppose.'

Gertrude Ellerslie had drawn a low seat by the fire in the cosy drawing-room at the Fort, having just parted with Mrs. Heywood, who had been for the past hour closeted with her father, Colonel Ellerslie, in the library.

The subject of the confab was a proposal on the part of Mrs. Heywood, who was going abroad for the winter with her daughter, to take Gertrude with her.

Gertrude's health needed no flight to a warmer climate, she did not know the meaning of delicacy; but the mere possibility of being in Germany, where she should have facilities and stimulus for the prosecution of music and languages, had opened up a vista in the girl's mind which the sentence of the past half-hour had clouded and closed.

'Your father won't hear of it, my dear,' said Mrs. Heywood, coming into the drawing-room, where Gertrude, too excited to do anything but pace up and down the room, waited for her. 'He says he doesn't wish you to become foreign, that he likes you best as you are; and, in short, after an hour's entreaty and expostulation on my part, he has ended as he began, by civilly yet resolutely declining to let you go.'

'Oh, Mrs. Heywood, how can'— but Gertrude checked herself ere the word crossed her lips, for the vision of a sweet face, now dead, as it committed to her care the father who would be so dependent on his child's sympathy and love, rose to her mind's eye. 'Won't he really? Every one said he wouldn't, but somehow I thought he would have given in to you.'

'No,' said Mrs. Heywood testily, for she didn't like the notion of not being given in to. 'He is as firm as a rock, no moving him; but I *am* horribly disappointed, and Rose will be wild when she hears it. How you would have revelled in the music at Stuttgart, and the paintings at Munich, and the'—

'Oh, please, stop! it almost drives me crazy to think of it; and then to stay on here, moping through the winter,—oh, it *is* disgusting!'

'Most; but then there's no help for it.'

'None. Papa is immoveable.'

'*You* might try; perhaps *you* would have more power of persuasion.'

'I! Thank you. You don't know Papa. He will never allude even to the subject with me, nor I with him. I shall just have to go on here in the most resigned, snail-gallop kind of way I can muster up.'

Mrs. Heywood was a Job's comforter sort of person, and continued for the next half-hour to enlarge on the fascinations and advantages of continental life as contrasted with the flat humdrum of a country house in the depth of winter. Nor had she been altogether sweetly disinterested in her desire to have Gertrude Ellerslie with her abroad! Her own daughter Rose, the idol and hope of her heart, was nevertheless so selfish and *exigeante* that she was often as much of a trial as a treasure! Besides, the advantage of having the handsome and generous daughter of one of the first county families in Lonshire, with plenty of money at her command, was not far to seek. But even her pertinacity had been forced to draw in by the courteous but cold determination of Colonel Ellerslie to keep his daughter at home.

'So, my dear, our castles in the air are demolished,' she wound up with, as she rose to go. 'I have done *mon petit possible* for you, I can do no more;' and with a shrug of her graceful shoulders, and a pretty little grimace, she glided away.

Gertrude went with her to the door, where her faded little pony-carriage was waiting for her; and as she tucked the white antelope-rug round her friend's mother, she could not help envying one who seemed able to go about the world at the dictates of her own sweet, if capricious, will, *sans peur et sans reproche.*

Gertrude had not recovered her equilibrium, as the reader must have perceived, when Bruce Morell entered. He *had* a knack somehow of turning up at wrong times, and his gaunt, angular figure, and awkward, stammering ways, were the reverse of soothing.

Had an ordinary visitor been at this moment ushered in, Gertrude would have summoned to the rescue her well-bred self-control; but for Bruce she would not trouble herself. He was her slave, her patient, long-suffering adorer and cousin, and her at present chafed feelings let themselves out upon him.

'Couldn't I read a little to you?' he said presently.

'Read! I should think not! It would drive me mad, with this headache, to hear you pounding away. Besides, it's too dark.'

'Let me ring for the lamp;' and he pulled the bell.

'I don't want the lamp!' exclaimed Gertrude, who dreaded the revelation of her flushed and agitated face. 'How tiresome you are, Bruce!'

'My mother hopes that you and my Uncle Ellerslie will come on Thursday evening. A friend of Jack's has come to stay a day or two, and he is extremely musical, and will enjoy hearing you play.'

'I'm not well enough to go out to entertain visitors just now,' said Gertrude. 'Besides, I'm beginning rather to dislike music. One never hears any here, and it's stupid always playing oneself. But here is Papa!' she added, rising as her father entered. 'You can see what he says,' and she vanished from the room.

She flew up-stairs to her room, locked the door behind her, and, throwing herself into a low rocking-chair by the fire, buried her burning face in her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

'Hard lines!' she muttered; 'the one golden prospect of my life dashed from me; shut up here with hardly a soul—a new soul, I mean—to see or rub ideas with; and all the

glorious music, and German, and travelling, and everything lost!'

She abandoned herself to gloomy thoughts over her 'miserable fate,' and had just succeeded in persuading herself that she was the innocent victim of a cruel destiny, which was steadily opposing all her wishes and bright prospects, when a knock at the door roused her from her musings.

'Is it time to dress already?' she exclaimed, as she opened the door and found her maid outside.

'Yes, Miss. I have knocked at least five times. Are you ill, Miss?' she added, as the tear-stained face and tumbled hair of her young mistress met her eye.

'No—yes, very—at least, rather,' answered Gertrude, as she rapidly began dressing, for punctuality was the soul of life at the Fort. 'What o'clock is it?'

'A quarter to seven, Miss,' and mistress and maid, roused alike to the gravity of their position, proceeded to the performance of a very hasty toilette.

Gertrude entered the drawing-room this evening with a beating heart and a flushed face. She had schooled herself into outward self-control; she had almost as great a hatred as men have of 'scenes;' and yet under all this self-restraint there was a deep current of angry irritation surging up against her father, who was the cause of her bitter disappointment.

He, as she entered, calmly laid down his magazine, glanced at the timepiece, and led the way to the dining-room. Her brother Fred, who was spending his autumn holidays at home, and Bruce, who had 'hung on,' as was not uncommon with him, made up the little party.

Fred rattled away, with a mental conviction that he had the task of four to do this evening, for his three companions were each absorbed apparently in thought.

Colonel Ellerslie grumbled over the dishes, and called for his slate to note down the various defections for the edification of the cook next morning. The dinner-hour was usually a nervous era in Gertrude's day, for her father's fastidiousness

about his food was trying to a degree. But even *she* seemed to-night quite impervious to the muttered anathemas over the faulty sauces, the under-done beef, and the roasted-to-a-cinder condition of the blackcock.

Bruce had an anxious, burdened expression, not usual with him, and kept dropping words into Gertrude's ear, which he intended to have a soothing effect on her ruffled spirit, but which in reality were as oil to the burning fire within her.

'You'll see,' he murmured.

No answer.

'I'm quite sure you will, Gerty. Gerty!' in a louder tone.

'What?'

'You *will* see!'

'What are you talking about?' with a not very gracious glance.

'You'll see that all this—that some good reason will come up for your'—in a hushed tone—'sore disappointment.'

'Ridiculous nonsense! Do be quiet! How can you tell such lies, Bruce?' with a scornful glance from her dark-blue eyes.

'You should have seen the gallant forty to-day, Bruce,' said Fred, dashing to the rescue.

'Which forty?' asked Bruce, rallying his scared wits. 'The forty thiev'—

'The forty blackcock away up on the ridge at Crosgair. There they are, each blessed day we go, with their scouts out, and sentinels posted all over the place; and just before you get within shot, the signal is given, and off they all fly!'

'How clever they are!' exclaimed Gerty, rousing into interest.

'I should just think so! Collins and I *had* a time of it to-day after them. We dodged behind stooks, crept on all fours, manœuvred, so that we really thought the beggars had never spotted us; when, lo! just before we started up, the

out-posts gave the signal, and away they all flew back into their stronghold, clean out of sight. A most horrid sell, I can tell you, for we lost the whole day.'

'Take this away,' Colonel Ellerslie is saying to the butler. 'What in the name of wonder is it?'

'Brained coquettes [brain crockets], sir.'

Colonel Ellerslie laid down the spoon, and, glancing across the table to Gertrude, said, 'I shall be obliged if you will tell Mrs. Cookson to teach Simmonds to give decent Christian names to her dishes.'

No reply.

'Did you hear, Gertrude?'

'Perfectly. I shall tell her.'

'What *is* the concern?' asked Fred, as Simmonds presented the dish to him.

'Mrs. Cookson told me, sir,' said Simmonds stoutly, his official dignity being much wounded by this public declaration of his ignorance,—'Mrs. Cookson told me, sir, that it was brained coquettes.'

'Well, wicked creatures though they be,' said Fred, stifling down his merriment, 'the dictates of my conscience, to say nothing of the dictates of my taste, forbid me to eat the mutilated remains of my greatest enemies. Bruce,' nodding across to his cousin, 'I commend to you these slain enemies. It will be a tasteful reminiscence to you all your life that fiery destruction does sometimes overtake these enemies of our peace.'

'And this?' asked the Colonel, glaring at the next *entrée* which Simmonds presented.

'Frisky chickens [fricasseed chickens], sir.'

'The scene is changed,' murmured Fred in a low tone, glancing at Gerty and Bruce with a world of fun in his eye. 'Battle and murder give place to life and fun!'

But the undercurrent of merriment was checked by the sound of Colonel Ellerslie's voice, tremblingly uttering some scathing soliloquy on the 'idiocy' generally of all his servants,

and of Simmonds in particular, followed by what Fred called 'a written prologue' on the slate for next morning's drama, on 'the sins and shortcomings of last night's dinner-table!'

At last dinner was over, and Gertrude, alone in the drawing-room, abandoned herself to her melancholy musings. There were some letters to write for next morning's early post, a library book to finish, and the accompaniment of a song for Fred to practise; but she silenced their mute appeals by assuring herself that, in her present crushed state, ordinary humdrum duties would be self-inflicted cruelty. She therefore sat gazing dreamily into the fire, nursing the chafed feelings, which a little dutiful exertion would have helped to kill; and when the gentlemen joined her, they could scarcely recognise in the cross, gloomy creature before them, the usually charming presiding genius of their home.

'Now for *The Pirate*, Gerty!' said Fred, lifting his new song and placing it on the piano.

'I really can't,' she answered snappishly.

'Bruce wants to hear it.'

'Bruce can't get everything he wants, any more than other people.'

'Oh, never—never mind,' said poor Bruce apologetically. 'It doesn't matter. Cousin Gerty has a headache, I fear.'

'Never had a headache in all my life, and hope I never shall What makes you think that?'

'Oh, because'—

'Shall I have my revenge at chess to-night, Gertrude?' asked her father. The Colonel disapproved of abbreviations in names. The girl started. Was it possible that her father could expect her to sit and play with him just as if nothing had happened, without, too, a word of explanation for all his despotic crushing of her hopes?

'It's my turn to have revenge,' she answered coolly. 'I'm very tired. I'm going to bed.'

Her father glanced keenly and anxiously at her as she bade

him good-night, but he merely said, 'I hope a night's rest will set you all to rights.'

'Are you ill, Gerty?' said Bruce, who, having said an abrupt good-night to his uncle and Fred as they seated themselves at the chess-board, followed her to the hall.

She was lighting her lamp, and as its flame fell across her face, the young man was startled at its paleness.

'Gerty, I'm so very, very sorry, but I'm sure, yes, quite and certain sure, that it will all—all turn out for your good, if only you—you would'—

Softened by the pathos of his voice, Gertrude pressed her lips together to keep back the words which rose to them. She held out her hand, and looked the question which she would not speak,—'Would what?'

'I know what I mean, Gerty,' stammered poor Bruce. 'But, you know, I cannot say it always, but,' and his voice quivered, 'when Alice died, I got such a great calming here,' placing his hand on his beating heart, 'when the words came into my mind, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."' He spoke the words firmly, and with an inspired sort of look, Gertrude thought.

'Who do you mean said that?' she asked eagerly.

'Himself,' answered Bruce, as he reverently pressed his lips upon her hand, and was gone.

The words rang in Gertrude's ear, vibrated through her throbbing frame, looked out upon her from the pages of the book she tried to read. While Arnot brushed her long golden hair, and when she laid her head upon her pillow, they seemed written on her very eye-balls, for she saw them when her eyes were shut.

Next morning, long before her usual time for rising, she awoke with a start. She had been dreaming that she was strolling along the banks of a river, gathering flowers and ferns; that imperceptibly the path led her higher and higher; that treacherous rocks, covered with tufted moss, fringed the banks of the precipice; that her eye caught sight of a fern she longed

to possess, perched on the edge of what proved to be a crumbling rock; and that, as she sprang forward to seize it, Bruce dragged her back. She flung him off, but he held her fast, and, leading her a few steps higher up, showed her the danger she had escaped, as the thin, deceitful-looking ledge, which must have yielded to her weight, would have carried her into a yawning gulf below. And as she gazed down the giddy depth, the river seemed singing the words into her astonished ear, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'

Gertrude tried to remember who had uttered these words and where they were to be found, and began to search her Bible for them. Her quick, intelligent mind gleaned many a truth as she glanced through the pages of the New Testament, till at last her eye lighted on the memorable verse. As she laid her Bible back on the shelf, she resolved henceforth to try to read it with more patience and interest.

CHAPTER II.

'She reads, converses, studies, for applause;
And therefore all that she desires to know
Is just as much as she can fairly show.'

CRABBE.

'ARE the Colonel and Gerty coming to dinner on Thursday, Bruce?' asked Lady Morell of her son next morning.

Bruce started, and stammered out that he had given Gerty his mother's message, but that—that he could not remember, in fact, what the answer was. Lady Morell suppressed a look of annoyance, and said pleasantly, laying her hand on Bruce's shoulder:

'Well, my dear fellow, you will just have to go and get an answer now. Captain Egerton,' turning to her guest, 'says he can only give us a very short visit at present, and I should like him and the Colonel to meet, and have a talk about Trichinoply and Bellary!'

Captain Egerton expressed politely the pleasure it would give him, and Lady Morell explained the dislike, the positive antipathy, she had to writing notes and letters, and how she made all possible use of her obliging son instead.

Just as Bruce, nothing loth, was starting for the Fort, he spied Mrs. Heywood and Rose coming up the avenue. Could he have got out of their way he certainly would, but it was too late; he must, as he said to himself, 'face the enemy.'

'Is Lady Morell at home?' asked Rose. 'I hope she has not yet started on her morning walk.'

'My mother was—is in the—hall, I believe—at least, she was when—I left!' answered Bruce.

'Will she still be in the hall?' asked Rose mischievously. How that girl delighted in making fun of Bruce! 'Couldn't you just run back and see?'

'I would, but I am going a message—going to the Fort.'

'Oh, Rose,' said Mrs. Heywood, 'don't let's keep Mr. Bruce. He is going to the Fort; we know the loadstar there, Mr. Bruce. But tell me, who is that splendid-looking man who came yesterday to visit you? An officer, I am sure.'

'Oh, it's Captain Egerton! He's in the Artillery. He's a friend of Jack's; at least, Jack knows him; not a friend exactly, but he once saved Jack's life when he was all but drowned, and so my mother wanted to know him.'

'Naturally, in the circumstances!' said Rose.

'Is he of the Egertons of Egerton?' But aside to her daughter, 'He won't know anything about that. Well, we mustn't keep you, Mr. Bruce. Adieu.' And they moved on to the house.

They found her ladyship in the drawing-room, and were introduced to the very distinguished-looking visitor. The real object of their visit was thus satisfactorily accomplished, although some fanciful questions about the best means of potting ferns and mosses were put.

'So nice that you should have happened to call this morning,' said easy, hospitable Lady Morell; 'it will save me a note. We are asking a few friends to dinner on Thursday, Mrs. Heywood. I hope you and Rose will kindly come at seven?'

'We shall be delighted,' answered Mrs. Heywood. 'It is always a pleasure to come to the Hall.'

While the elder ladies plunged into a little gossip, very dear to both of them, Rose and Captain Egerton struck up a brisk talk. It is wonderful sometimes how much two persons can gather of each other's history in a few minutes. A pretty

accurate estimate of the existing circumstances of each was arrived at by the time Mrs. Heywood rose to go.

'When do you go abroad?' Captain Egerton asked, as he shook hands with Rose.

'Not for a week or a fortnight yet,' said Rose. 'Mamma has business which will keep her at home indefinitely till it is settled.'

'Who is he, mother? Is he rich?' asked Rose of her mother as they walked down the avenue, for she had caught snatches of the talk of the two ladies.

'He is an orphan, has scarcely a relative in the world, Lady Morell understands, and has inherited a large patrimony, but no estates. His father was whimsical, and left in his will that his lands were to be sold, and the capital divided among his four children—this Captain Egerton being only a second son. But his elder brother was killed in the hunting-field, and his two sisters have since died, and he has come in for everything.'

'Has he retired?'

'No; Lady Morell says he doesn't mean to, and that he is as brave and good as he is wealthy.'

'Did you ask him to come to Garnlee?'

'No, it doesn't do to rush at people, my dear. He is sure to be at the Yorke Ewing's dinner party to-night. We shall improve our acquaintance there, I hope.'

'I shall, anyhow,' retorted Rose.

'Well, try and play your cards better than you did with Major Charlton. We are in desperately low water, you know. I am thankful Garnlee is let, and for a couple of years too. It will clear off some of our debts, and pay our way abroad; but it won't last for ever.'

'How disgusting it is to be poor!' said Rose; 'it's too bad. There's Gertrude, she can get whatever she wants—whatever—her father's so proud of her; and she has just to tell him she is getting such and such a thing, and send in the bills to him.'

'Yes, but she is the reverse of extravagant, Rose.'

'Is she?' with a sneer.

'Yes, her father told me so himself yesterday, and said he wished her to retain her straightforwardness and simplicity, and not get continental vagaries into her head! She is a splendid-looking girl, and so true and *naïve!*'

'Do you think so, mother? I shouldn't wonder if she became a great over-grown woman some day.'

'I should, her figure is so exquisitely moulded; besides which, her graceful bearing will never change.'

Now, if there is one person in the world of whom Rose Heywood is jealous it is Gertrude Ellerslie, yet they are intimates *par excellence;* and if there is not much sympathy of love, or pursuit, or taste,—such as form the elements of real friendship,—there is early association and companionship, and a community of interests, to make a strong and usually happy intimacy.

No greater contrast than exists between the two girls in appearance and disposition could be conceived. Gertrude, from her vantage-ground of wealth and position, looks kindly and feelingly on Rose, whose life is so hampered by straitened means; while Rose casts an envious eye upon Gertrude, grudging her the admiration she receives, and is inwardly resolved to eclipse her some day, by the splendid match she shall make and the position in the world to which she shall attain.

Was this Captain Egerton, she mentally soliloquized, as she relapsed into silence during the rest of the walk home—was he to be her fate? She should have to find out a little more about him, as to the prospect of titles and honours, as well as riches, and then she would set to work.

Two things helped to raise Rose's spirits during the course of the day—the one being that Gertrude was not to be at the Yorke Ewing's dinner party, and the second that Captain Egerton was next heir to a baronetcy.

Fred Ellerslie, who rode over in the afternoon to Garnlee to see Rose and break to her the unexpected news of his sudden recall to Edinburgh next day, was able to give her some of the

information for which she thirsted, but which she contrived to ask for in a tone of quite disarming indifference. She expressed her surprise and regret at Fred's sudden start in a most becoming way, while she secretly congratulated herself on this convenient turn of affairs, as leaving her unobserved and unchallenged by her guileless but ardent lover, to manufacture and carry out her little game with this interesting stranger. Poor Fred — bright, generous Fred! single-hearted and unsuspicious—believed not more in his own true love for the artful girl before him than in the truth of her protestations of affection for him. She held him between herself and want in the matter of a husband, but had not the faintest intention of ever exalting him to such a connection. She condescended to take the fresh pure flowers he had brought her, and promised to wear them in the evening at dinner, adding as she bade him farewell, that all the heart of the party was taken out of it since he was not to be there. A prettily worded little invective against early trains and cross, fidgety 'governors,' who insisted on having everybody at home the night before a start, closed the interview; Fred, amid his own regrets, remarking that he couldn't make out the governor about journeys and departures, he always seemed so nervous when any of them left.

As soon as he had ridden away, Rose flew to her room, fluttering with expectation and hope, to make preparations for the dinner party.

Infinite were the pains she took over her toilette for the eventful evening, and the effect was, to say the least, striking.

Rose was *petite*, but elegant in figure, and her face was beautiful. She had dark eyes, and a profusion of rich wavy black hair, which to-night was very carefully arranged, and in the thick tresses of which she artistically arranged artificial sprigs of scarlet geraniums.

'If only I knew if Captain Egerton goes in for art or nature,' she pondered, as she surveyed the effect of the flowers, and held in her hands one of the white camellias from Fred's bouquet. 'If only I knew! But as I don't, here goes for my

favourite art!' and, flinging the camellias aside, she fastened the geraniums in her hair and in her black net dress.

The usual disappointment of 'always being sent in to dinner with the wrong person' was not in store for her this evening, for Captain Egerton was requested to hand her to dinner.

He politely expressed his pleasure at meeting her again, and she felt sure he admired her exceedingly. He remarked upon the scenery of the county, seen, as it had been by him, in a long ride with Bruce.

Rose, who had neither eye nor heart for scenery, diverged into talking of the families in the neighbourhood.

'Lady Morell is charming. Is she not?'

'Very.'

'So good-natured and funny.'

No answer.

'Have you known them long?'

'Oh no. I got acquainted with Mr. Morell about a year ago, and he kindly asked me to visit him.'

Rose noticed that he said nothing about saving him from drowning when the ice broke on the Serpentine.

'He *is* a character, but nothing to Bruce,' she went on.

Captain Egerton glanced anxiously at his friends on the other side of the table, hoping that they were not within earshot of these very personal remarks.

'Mr. Morell has always spoken so affectionately of his mother and brother,' said Captain Egerton gravely.

'So he may; they are devoted to him. Just look at him. Did you ever see anything so like a monkey?'

The Honourable Jack, as he is universally called, had nothing certainly to boast of in looks. Short and squat, with a reserved, shy manner, and not very much to say in company, at least, he stared through his eye-glass at his opposite neighbours in a somewhat exasperating way. It never seemed to occur to him that he had any special concern with his companions on either side of him, unless when it suited his

own pleasure or inclination. Bruce, on the contrary, was labouring to talk to the Miss Yorke Ewing who was his special charge; and, judging from the interested expression of her face, his efforts were not in vain.

'I expected to have met your friends from the Fort this evening,' said Captain Egerton, changing the subject of their talk.

'Ah,' said Rose, with a thump at her heart, 'they were to have been here, but Fred had a telegram summoning him to Edinburgh to-morrow, and Colonel Ellerslie said they must all stay at home the last evening. He is so odd when any one is going away; the day before is held like a kind of funeral, and they all stay together, and I suppose mope.'

'Really!' with interest.

'Have you seen Ger—Miss Ellerslie?'

'Only her photograph. She is all over the house at the Hall, but the pleasure of seeing herself is in store for me some evening, I am told. She is evidently a great favourite of Lady Morell.

'Yes, I fancy she is,' said Rose reluctantly. 'Her father and Lady Morell are cousins, and they are all very intimate. She and the girls are not great friends, however.'

'Are they not?'

'No; Gertrude is—well, she is pretty much kept in by Colonel Ellerslie, and not allowed to go in with their fast ways. Isn't it too bad, Captain Egerton? He has never sent her to school, just had governesses for her all her life; and now, when the splendid chance of going with us to France and Germany is given her, he refuses to let her go. Gertrude is in a dreadful way about it. My mother said she never saw a girl so cut up about anything as she was yesterday when he declined her offer to take her with us.'

Captain Egerton glanced up the table at the showily-dressed woman of the world, and then back to her pretty but affected daughter at his side, but did not speak.

'Adelaide and Hilda would have simply *made* their mother

let them go, and so would I; but fathers are different. By the bye, what has become of Adelaide and Hilda to-night?'

'Dash, Miss Morell's pet spaniel, was rather over-run to-day, and came home thoroughly knocked up, and she wouldn't leave it, and Miss Hilda stayed'—

'To help Adelaide to nurse it,' interrupted Rose, laughing. 'Just like them. They're simply mad about horses and dogs. But are they not handsome, Captain Egerton?'

'The horses, or the dogs?'

'Oh no, the girls; but, you know, they're both engaged.'

'A friendly hint to me not to lose my heart, eh, Miss Heywood? Thank you for your consideration,' said Captain Egerton, laughing. 'I'm not very susceptible, however, I think.'

This was damping; and the grave, somewhat pre-occupied expression of his face, when not forced to reply to the rattle of his companion, told of a heart often far away from the present scene.

'He needs rousing,' said Rose to herself; 'quiet men like lively people.' And she launched out into an amusingly clever, but very sarcastic, description of the neighbouring families, with their idiosyncrasies, and oddities, and whims.

Captain Egerton made a few feeble attempts to defend the to him unknown victims of Rose's sharp tongue; and at last when a breathing time succeeded, as the ice went round, he inquired if she were going to hear Mr. Morell's lecture next evening.

'Oh yes. Everybody's going there. All the county will turn out to hear him. I only hope he won't stick, which most likely he will. He has taken up chemistry, just as he did botany. There are people in the world, Captain Egerton, who, as soon as they know a little about things, take for granted that their neighbours know nothing, and straightway proceed to enlighten them.'

'I wasn't aware that Morell knew anything about chemistry,' said Captain Egerton. 'I quite look forward to the lecture.'

'So do I,' said Rose. 'It will be great fun, I am sure.'

CHAPTER III.

'Loose as these events seem to hang upon one another, yet they are all knit and united together in a firm chain, and the highest link of that chain is held and managed by an unerring Providence. The chain indeed may wave and shake this way and that, but still the hand that holds it is steady and the eye that guides it is infallible.'

THE next morning rose fair and calm, promising one of those clear, charming days which in Scotland is often enjoyed in October. Gertrude was early up, full of loving attentions to Fred, who was to leave by the morning train to return to Edinburgh.

Poor Gertrude had had a time of remorse and repentance towards father and brother since her snubbing manners two nights ago. And while her father took all her kind ways calmly, and as a matter of course, generous Fred, who was ardently attached to his sister, as she to him, was not slow to recognise them, and to let her know he did.

'How awfully good you are to me, Gerty!' he said, as she met him at his early breakfast, and laid on the table his luncheon-basket, packed with all sorts of tempting viands. 'Why, you must have been up in the middle of the night to make all these sandwiches and things!'

'O Fred, you know I would do anything for you!' said the girl, flushing deeply as she added, 'and yet—and yet—oh, I didn't play *The Pirate* for you the other night, and was so cross and horrid! I want to tell you how awfully sorry I am, Fred!'

She laid her hand on his arm, and forced back the tears which trembled in her eyes.

'When? What *is* the girl talking about?' said Fred, twining his arm round the slender waist, and laying for a second his head upon her shoulder. 'You play for me till I wonder you are not sick tired of my "Pirates" and "Vagabonds;" but'—suddenly looking up in her face—'you'll try and be happy and well when I'm away, Gerty, for I know it has been a horrid sell this staying at home. I feel most awfully for you!'

Gertrude stooped to strap the rugs with an energy quite unnecessary for the occasion, but did not speak; and Fred continued:

'Don't sit moping in the house over it. Fill up your time, and go tearing all over the place. It's the best plan; I've found it. You'll try, won't you?' looking up coaxingly into his sister's dear, beautiful face, as she sprang up.

'Won't I just!' she answered. 'And I'll have those new songs splendidly got up when you come home at Christmas, Fred.'

'Jolly!' he exclaimed, as the wheels of the dog-cart were heard coming up the avenue. 'And you'll look after the pups,' as Fly and Wasp, two pretty fox-terriers, sprang into the room, and jumped upon him; 'and you'll tell me how Duke's lame leg gets on—oh! and everything just as you always do. Your letters are splendid, Gerty! Many a laugh they give me, coming in, as they always do, when I am in the thick of anatomy, or mathematics, or something dark. And you'll tell me about Rose? She is feeling leaving Garnlee so much; she has the warmest heart that ever beat. She would have given anything to have come to dinner last night, as you asked her, but said she *had* to go to the Ewings, although she would a thousand times rather have come here. But she never thinks about herself. Perhaps I may take a run over to Stuttgart during the Christmas recess; it would be good for my German as well as for myself—eh, Gerty?'

'If only you might!' said his sister doubtfully.

'If only I hadn't lost my time going to sea, I might have had the practice in Kilbarton by this time. Rose would have been done with her money troubles and worries then.'

'Are you and she engaged, Fred?' asked Gertrude, looking her brother straight in the face.

'As good as,' answered the young man, with a radiant smile. 'She accepted a ring from me yesterday, and we understand one another. But you mustn't speak of it to her.'

'Mustn't I? Why?'

'She said it must be a dead secret. Only you're different. I couldn't help telling you; I thought you'd be so glad;' and pressing his sister in a brotherly hug, Fred sprang into the dog-cart, and seizing the reins, drove rapidly away.

Gertrude turned into the house, with a sad and weary feeling in her heart. She met her father, when precisely at nine o'clock he entered the breakfast-room, with much of her usually kind manner. Explanations with him she knew to be impossible. She could only hope to be dutiful, and that what she called 'right feelings' would come back again. But she was almost driven off the rails of her good resolutions by her father leading the conversation to the subject of Mrs. Heywood and Rose, and animadverting in very strong terms on the frivolity of both mother and daughter, and on his satisfaction that they were so soon to leave the country.

'They haven't paid their butcher and baker, I am told, for the last twelvemonth,' he exclaimed; 'and Rose has bewitched Fred, it seems. Conceive his idiocy in going over to Garnlee yesterday, taking camellias and trash, and staying all the afternoon! He may save himself the trouble. Rose is not the girl to look over her shoulder at a younger son, a medical student whose foot is not even on the ladder yet!'

'Oh, Papa!' exclaimed Gertrude warmly; 'any girl would be proud of Fred, and Rose is so pretty!'

Colonel Ellerslie compressed his lips, and lifted his newspaper.

Then presently, as Gertrude was leaving the room, he said, 'I've had it out with Simmonds about the other night. Order the dinner at five this evening, remember, Gertrude; and be sure to tell Cookson not to forget lemons for the pancakes.'

'At five, papa?' asked his daughter, astonished.

'Yes; this is Jack's lecture night, you know. I promised him we should go.'

'Goodness! It will never be a *lecture*, papa,' said Gerty, smiling.

'Why shouldn't it? The fellow has brains enough.'

'Hardly.'

'Nonsense, Gertrude!' dropping his eyes again upon his paper; 'at any rate, we shall go and hear him.'

'We shall all be covered with confusion, I expect,' murmured Gerty as she left the room. 'Whatever has possessed Jack to make a public spectacle of himself?'

An hour later, with Fred's words of counsel in her ear,—to occupy herself, and so to deaden the effects of her disappointment,—Gertrude, having completed her household arrangements, and seen her father ensconced in his chair, with his book, at the library fire, set forth, with a pretty covered basket in her hand, to make her usual weekly visit to Nurse Brown. Gertrude walked briskly along; yet her spirit was certainly not in tune with the calm beauty of the day.

'To think of Papa talking so against Rose and her mother when he knows what frien—how much we are—at least, how dreadfully I wanted to go abroad. And then never to say a word about being sorry to disappoint me. It's hard lines; but it's always the way with him. Well, Jip,' caressing her favourite little Scotch terrier, who always accompanied his young mistress in her walks, 'it's a queer world this. When one person wants to stay at home, she hasn't money to do it, and must go away; and another who has, wants to go abroad, and can't budge. If you and I had to arrange things, what a grand time of it we should have!'

She flung a stone across the grass park through which they were walking, and Jip, barking and wagging his tail, tore away after it.

Presently she stopped at a cottage on a secluded hill-side, and knocked gently at the door.

'Come in,' a voice from within answered feebly.

'Well, Brown, how is the rheumatism to-day?' she said, in a kindly, cheerful tone, hastening towards a fragile-looking woman seated on a low chair beside the fire.

'Unco weel, thank-ee, Miss Gerty. An' hoo's the Kornel an' Maister Fred?'

'Fred's away to Edinburgh this morning,' answered Gertrude, taking the offered chair beside Nurse. 'And Papa's just in his "ordnair." I'm the only member of the family in a drooping condition—*unco frail*, don't I look?'

Nurse Brown gazed at the dazzling creature before her as she said, 'Ye aye mind me, Miss Gerty, o' what I think Eve must have been. Maister John Milton describes her beautiful.'

Gerty was busy emptying her basket of its miscellaneous but carefully selected contents, and she exclaimed: 'Now, Nurse, you're to have part of this chicken for your dinner to-day, tell John when he comes in; and these cream tarts are Mrs. Cookson's last effort in the sweet line, and even Papa declares they are a perfect success; and he sent you this,' holding up a tempting bunch of grapes.

She placed all neatly on plates, and filling a glass with water, arranged a few lovely flowers, and put them on the little table beside her.

'I'll not bother you with their names to-day,' she exclaimed, laughing. 'Wasn't it Mary Powell who said to her husband to be, your friend John Milton, that if Adam gave names to the beasts, Eve, she thought, must have named the flowers? I don't believe she ever gave them such jaw-breaking titles as our botanists have, all the same!'

'Oh, they're sweet, sweet, Miss Gerty,' said Brown, lifting

the glass and drinking in their beauty and fragrance. 'I canna thank ye as I would.'

But soon her eye wandered away from the flowers to the young girl herself, as she stood there in her youth and beauty, tall and slight, yet with a figure betokening robust health. The unconscious grace in every movement lent a charm to her person. Her face was oval, and a pair of large lustrous blue eyes, varying with her moods, told ever the true tale of her heart within. The glow on her cheeks contrasted with the clear fairness of her complexion; and a small well-shaped mouth told of a certain firmness of character, as well as of openness of disposition; while a quantity of nut-brown hair was gathered simply back, and arranged in shining coils upon her well-set head.

Just as she was leaving the cottage, Bruce Morell and a stranger gentleman arrived.

'We saw Jip,' exclaimed Bruce, his whole face lighting up with pleasure as he shook hands with her, 'and so I knew you would be here.'

Gerty glanced at the stranger,—Bruce had forgotten to introduce them,—and said, with perfect grace, 'Captain Egerton, I presume. I am Gertrude Ellerslie, Bruce's cousin. I heard you were at the Hall.'

Captain Egerton lifted his cap, smiled, and bowed, mentally wondering how all the good looks and *esprit* seemed to have concentrated on the female portion of the families among whom he found himself, to the very grievous disparagement of the men. For as he looked at Gerty, in her pretty navy-blue costume and country hat, with its bunches of scarlet poppies, never, he felt, had he beheld a fairer, sweeter face and form.

'Are you going in to see Brown?' Gerty asked of Bruce.

'Yes—no—but—I mean, we'll come a bit with you first, and then go in. Here—Nettle!—Jip!' calling to the dogs. 'Captain Egerton—you—will you care to come a bit?'

'I should rather think so, if Miss Ellerslie will allow me.'

'Oh, certainly!' said Gerty, who always wearied of walks with Bruce. 'I'm just going down to the lodge-gate at St. Helen's

to ask,' addressing Bruce, 'what time to-morrow they expect Miss Maitland home.'

'You live in the midst of lovely scenery, Miss Ellerslie,' said Captain Egerton, as they walked along the soft turf.

'Oh yes!' said Gerty indifferently.

'It is so much more undulating than I expected Scotch scenery to be.'

'Yes,' said Gerty, smiling. 'Did you expect to find nothing but rocks and steep mountains?—no flowers, and the people going about in kilts? We in Lonshire, living so near the border-land, count ourselves a little more civilised than our northern friends. Is this your first visit to Scotland?'

'Oh no!' smiling. 'I know Edinburgh well. I have been a good deal there, and in some of the northern counties; but this sort of country is very different — so peaceful and quiet.'

'A great deal *too* quiet, Captain Egerton,' said Gertrude earnestly; 'quite fatiguingly quiet!'

'You prefer town life?' looking earnestly at his companion.

'No, I don't think I should,—not the town life that Rose and Adelaide and Hilda lead, when they get the chance,' she said, almost soliloquizing. 'At least, I don't *think* I should. But, then, they say it's because I know nothing about it that I fancy that I should hate it. I'm not at all sure that I can explain what I should like, but I sometimes wonder what's the use of life; I mean that I think something higher and nobler is intended for us than just to eat, and walk, and read, and try to amuse ourselves, and so forth; and I wanted so very, *very* much to travel, and get a little more stimulus into my life, and not just rust away here. Home-keeping youths, you know, Captain Egerton, have homely wits. I am ambitious; I have a great longing in my heart, and nothing satisfies or fills it. Everything at home seems so small. But I daresay you think me crazy,' she added impetuously, casting an earnest, searching glance at her companion as she spoke.

Captain Egerton did not speak, his mind and heart were too full for words.

'Here,' he thought, 'is a soul unsatisfied, thirsting for it knows not what. Oh, that I might help to lead her to the living water!'

They had left the meadows and the hill-side, and had reached Miss Maitland's lodge. Bruce, who had most reluctantly fallen behind, having had to extract a thorn from Jip's foot, now joined them, and Gertrude's heightened colour, for she felt abashed at her frankness in talking as she had done to a stranger, called forth his instant remark.

'Oh, Gerty, how hot you are! Why did you walk at such a tremendous pace? Have you taken cold, do you think? What will your father say?'

'Nonsense, Bruce! How ridiculous you are!' she answered impatiently, as she opened the gate, and knocked at the door of the lodge. 'You know I never had a cold in my life.'

'Well, Anne, by what train do you expect Miss Maitland home to-morrow? and are Mrs. Græme and the young ladies coming too?' asked Gerty of the tidy woman who opened the door.

'Eh, Miss Gerty, we have a note this mornin', and something's detained Miss Maitland, and she's obliged to put off comin' home indiscreetly.'

'Indefinitely,' said Gerty gently. 'Oh, I *am* sorry! *When* will she ever get home?'

'Dear knows, Miss. An' Miss Maitland has her Bible-class summonzied for Sabbath nicht, and naebody to tak' it. Wad ye try'd, Miss?'

'Me, Anne! you know I couldn't,' impatiently.

'An' she says in her letter to John,—for it's to John she aye writes, he's siccan a gran' scholar by me,—she says he bid to ask the Kornel to help to get owre Johnnie into the Effervescent Hospital, Miss. He's comed on rale weel in the Infirmary, but noo she says the Effervescent's the place for him. Maybe ye would ask the Kornel to speak to Dr. Wright, Miss Gerty?'

'I shall be sure to, Anne. Papa and I are going to Kilbarton this afternoon. I shall ask him to call at once on the Doctor. The Convalescent Home is the very thing for Johnnie.'

'Thank ye, Miss Gerty,' said Anne. 'You're unco prompt and kind.'

'Is Miss Maitland one of your county absentees?' asked Captain Egerton of Bruce as they walked away.

'No, no; oh dear me, no!' answered the young man. 'She is the—whatever do you call her, Gerty?'

'The Queen of Women, *I* call her!' said Gerty, turning to Egerton. 'She is, well, as near perfection as is possible.'

'Not *too* sublime!' said Egerton, smiling at her enthusiasm.

'Oh no; so infinitely superior to everybody, and yet so human and pitiful to others!'

'Does she live alone at that pretty place?' asked Egerton.

'No; she has a houseful of cousins with her, and they are as unlike her as fire to water. I often think they are too much for her; but I believe she met with great kindness from some member of the family once, and feels she can never do enough to show her gratitude. She is most kind and devoted to them, and they have a happy home with her.'

Bruce stuck like a leech to his companions during the short walk from St. Helen's to the Fort, and Captain Egerton was grave and quiet. Just as they were parting, however, he said, 'Miss Ellerslie, believe me, you will never get your heart filled by any or all of the things of earth. God made your heart for Himself; He alone can satisfy or fill it. Ask Him, and He will.'

He pressed her hand respectfully as they parted, and she hastened to her room, full of new strange thoughts.

CHAPTER IV.

'If four times five were fifty,
And one made thirty more,
Then youth at one and twenty
Were wiser than fourscore.
But since by book and table
Our summing must be done,
A head at one and twenty
Is only twenty-one.'

TALLY ho, tally ho! was the stirring sound that woke the echoes this afternoon in the sleepy old town of Kilbarton. The notes proceeded from a shrill horn, blown by the rosy lips of the beautiful Adelaide Morell, who, standing conductor-fashion at the back of the coach her sister was driving, announced to all the advent of the party from the Hall. The equipage, whose coming was thus boisterously heralded, was by no means a very distinguished-looking turn-out, nor in any way remarkable, except for its occupants on the top.

Driving unicorn was Hilda Morell, whose dark, short-cut hair was adorned by a hat of grey felt and sweeping feather, placed sideways on her head; the rest of her person was enveloped in a voluminous dust-cloak, or, more strictly speaking, hooded-coat. Beside her, looking on in apparent admiration of her feats, is seated a handsome Irishman, James Fitzgerald, Hilda's *fiancé;* while his cousin, Sam Tyes, who is engaged to Adelaide, a man of very fashionable and rather

striking appearance, occupies a seat beside the fair horn-blower. Mrs. Heywood and Rose, Captain Egerton, Mr. Morell, and Bruce, make up the party, dispersed at various intervals on the top of the coach.

'I hope you won't blow us all up, Jack, with your experiments!' Adelaide exclaims, suddenly addressing her brother, who has a nervous, pre-occupied look about him.

'So that Gertrude is safe out of it, what would it signify if we were?' Hilda answers, nodding back her head, and then letting her whip touch gracefully the leader's head. Jack's devotion to Gertrude is a patent fact If his present scientific efforts were stripped of all spurious motives, his aim, pure and simple, would be found to be not so much to benefit the Kilbarton 'Working-Men's Institute,' as to appear to fit in a little more than he usually does with her intellectual tastes. Chemistry has taken his fancy, and after a very short study of the subject he has resolved upon this lecture, to the dismay of his family, who, however, can only hope the experiments will 'go off;' and whose good taste, triumphing over their anxiety and dread, has brought them, with the exception of Lady Morell, who has 'one of her headaches,' to Kilbarton for the occasion.

They have driven in early to let Captain Egerton 'see the place.'

'Very likely Gerty won't come,' said Hilda.

Jack scowled. 'As likely as not; it's only lectures of a high order that she condescends to attend.'

'She *is* coming,' said Captain Egerton quietly, seeing Jack's rising ire.

'Have you seen Gert—Miss Ellerslie?' asked Rose, who had hoped her rival was as yet off the field.

'Yes, we met her this morning.'

'Where?' asked Hilda.

'At Nurse Brown's,' answered Bruce.

'Ah, to be sure!' exclaimed Adelaide. 'Bruce haunts that region once a week, from sunrise to sundown, to be

blessed with a glance of Gerty. Many a trap he sets—to catch —a sunbeam,' and as she spoke she lifted her horn, and blew a shrill blast, as if to scatter in the air the words she had uttered, and which carried confusion into her poor brother's heart and face.

'Fred has gone suddenly off,' said Adelaide, vexed with herself when too late, and anxious to change the subject. 'What's up, eh, Rose?'

'Nothing particular,' answered the young lady, trying to look conscious. 'His professor in Edinburgh wanted him for some secretary work or something, and it was thought a great distinction, so off he went.'

'Come, Morell,' said Tyes, 'let's hear the sound of your voice; give us the opening utterances of your lecture; good time for rehearsal!'

But Mr. Morell is evidently, in true *artiste* fashion, 'saving his voice,' and a sickly smile is all the response. Presently they rattled into Kilbarton. The young ladies, who were smoking cigarettes, threw them away as they alighted at the inn, scrambling down by the wheels, without waiting for any assistance from the gentlemen.

While walking about the town the dust-cloaks were thrown open, displaying the rest of their picturesque, if not very ladylike, dress. Hilda wore a short scarlet petticoat, above which was festooned a short skirt of brown serge; scarlet stockings, and buckled shoes, showing off to advantage her well-shaped feet and ankles, completed her costume.

Adelaide's dress was pretty much like her sister's, the predominant colour, however, being blue, to suit her fairer complexion and hair. She retained her horn during their walk, now and then sending forth a flourish as the fancy seized her, the not unfamiliar sound bringing many a head to the shop-doors to catch a glimpse of the eccentric, but decidedly popular, young ladies from the Hall.

Rose, whose straitened means prevented her ever achieving the summit of her wishes in dress, but who exerted all her

wits to produce a good effect, wore a short, black, well-fitting costume, with maize tie, and feather of the same colour in her bewitching hat, while rather too profuse a bedanglement of ornaments, than suited at least Captain Egerton's taste, glittered about her pretty person.

The Honourable Jack,—Honourable, as he is universally called, not from hereditary right, but as fitting in to his pomposity,—with Bruce, his assistant, went off to the Institute direct, while the rest of the party started to show Captain Egerton the lions of the place.

The gay spirits of the girls seemed to infect the rather stagnant inhabitants of the sleepy streets, and many were the smiles and respectful bows which greeted them as the party straggled up the long street; the substantial purchases they usually made rendering their visits to the town always most welcome. Sometimes their feats carried rather tragic results, as, for instance, to-day, when, seeing a decrepit old woman leaning half out of a window, in her eagerness to see 'the quality,' Adelaide lifted her horn, and blew it right into her face, making the poor old body tumble backwards in her astonishment and fright. At the same moment, the steed of an inoffensive young farmer, who was riding past, got a lash from Hilda's whip, which started it off tearing through the town in a most undignified way, to the no small confusion and dismay of its rider!

CHAPTER V.

'We sometimes think we could a speech produce
Much to the purpose, if our tongues were loose;
But being tried, it dies upon the lip,
Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip;
Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,
Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.'

COWPER.

'WHAT a crowd we shall have!' said Rose to Captain Egerton, beside whom, at the end of a row of seats, she managed to get herself placed.

'Yes, indeed,' he replied gravely. 'I trust Morell will—will manage it—all!'

'Not he! But he's the great man about, and everybody will turn out.'

Captain Egerton's eyes wandered away rather too much towards the door for Rose's taste.

For whom was he looking? and what business had he to watch for any one when she was seated next him?

That Captain Egerton was unlike most men, she had soon discovered. That air of unconsciousness, of warm interest in others, the sympathetic kindling of his dark eye, and the ineffable genuineness that was over and about him, marked him out from the common run of the county gentlemen of Lonshire. The interests of these were, for the most part, concentrated on themselves, their stables, and their hounds, and left them with little time, or means, or inclination for the benefit of the rest of mankind.

What his 'style' was of womankind she had not yet arrived at, for he seemed a better listener than talker; and, quick as she usually was to catch her cue, and throw her chameleon character into the mould of those she wished to please, she was yet in the dark as 'to what he liked, and what he might abhor.'

A goodly number of the members of the 'Working-Men's Institute' and their friends filled the chairs in the body of the hall. Many also of the *élite* of Kilbarton, not generally given to attending the Working-Men's Lectures, are drawn this evening by the fact that it is the Honourable Mr. Morell who is to be the exponent of science.

No one ever dreamt that he had a particle of science in him, but that may have been their ignorance, to be sure; and then he is the Honourable Jack! Any way, the hall is now packed; and as the door once more opens, and Colonel Ellerslie and Gertrude enter, they glance round the room vainly trying to discover seats.

Instantly Captain Egerton rises, and as the Colonel makes his way towards the Morell party, he offers Gertrude his seat, which she gracefully accepts, while room is made for the Colonel in the row before.

Captain Egerton manages to get the corner of a bench running parallel to the row of seats occupied by the Hall party, and close to Gertrude, and presently the lecturer and his assistant mount the platform, where their apparatus has already been placed.

'All went merry as a marriage bell,' and as the simple preliminary experiments were successfully explained and illustrated, the audience began to feel that a chemistry lecture was certainly most improving and edifying.

Colonel Ellerslie breathed freely, and a sigh of relief escaped Captain Egerton, which made Gertrude turn her eyes towards his flushed, eager face.

'If Jack were his own brother,' she thought, 'he couldn't be more anxious.'

In a trice, however, the feeling of relief is changed into one of anxiety. The lecturer is describing the ordinary candle-flame, and one experiment only has exemplified the principles enunciated; but now the candle *will* go out when it has been advertised to burn with increased brilliancy, and persists in burning like lime light when the lecturer prophesies immediate extinction. The lecturer, however, becomes re-assured, and proceeds to illustrate more scientific facts.

'Air,' he informs the audience, 'is composed of a mixture of gases,—oxygen and nitrogen,—in certain proportions.'

'Wonderful, really!' whispers Rose to Gertrude; 'quite surprising! So glad we came to hear all the modern novelties of science!'

To show this, the rising Faraday proceeded to burn phosphorus in a bell-jar over water, but Kilbarton air seemed to object to be disintegrated, as the small china cup in which the phosphorus was placed persisted in sinking to the bottom of the pneumatic trough, thereby extinguishing the phosphorus. The lecturer, however, recovering from the effects of this unexpected and puzzling conduct on the part of the phosphorus, explained what ought to have happened, and passed undaunted to the next illustration.

'Facing the difficulty, and passing on,' whispered Tyes to Hilda. 'Jack has pluck enough, if rather short of science!'

The next experiment was the manufacture of oxygen by the application of heat to chlorate of potash.

Two jars were filled with the gas, and charcoal was successfully ignited in one of them, and, although scintillations were at the minimum, the spectators applauded, and the lecturer smiled, feeling that his triumph had at last come. The applause, however, had hardly subsided, when a brilliant light, followed by a suffocating smell, was noticed in the direction of Bruce, caused by a piece of phosphorus, which, carefully dried and deposited on the table, in anticipation of a future experiment, had, with most mistaken zeal, burst into flame, and refused to be extinguished. The lecturer, with

admirable presence of mind, placed a hyacinth glass over it, and appealed to the spectators to calm themselves.

All would now have gone right had not Bruce moved the imprisoned phosphorus, which immediately re-ignited on his finger, to his evident confusion. This self-sacrifice on the part of Bruce, for the amusement of the spectators, was much appreciated by the 'working-men' portion of the community, and the lecturer smiled, but the assistant failed to see the joke! By this time the atmosphere of the room was almost insupportable; several ladies were in a fainting condition, the Misses Morell were fidgety and flushed, Egerton was pale with mortification, while Colonel Ellerslie clenched his teeth and struck his stick with some violence on the floor.

Suffocation and other disagreeables were, however, kindly regarded by the audience as a *sine qua non* to a successful lecture; and the Hon. Jack prepared a raw bit of phosphorus, which was successfully ignited in the second jar of oxygen. The experiment of the sun in the bottle was displayed in all its magnificence, the spectators applauded, but the lecturer's smiles were sickly,—he had burned his fingers so badly!

Hydrogen was next introduced, and preparations were made for its manufacture. Sulphuric acid was poured into a Wolfe's bottle, which contained granulated zinc; and the lecturer proceeded to remark on the properties of the gas, explaining that it is the lightest of the gases, colourless, tasteless, and inodorous when pure, and scarcely ever found in a free state.

All further description, however, was interrupted by indications that the acid was disagreeing with the zinc to an alarming extent. A loud report followed, and the bottle was shivered into a thousand pieces, while the acid and acidulated zinc were scattered wildly in all directions. This was the straw that would have broken any ordinary lecturer's back, and it had a discomfiting effect even upon the self-conscious Jack. Stammering out a few disjointed words of apology and regret, at the same time throwing out reflections on the quality of the

zinc, and the quite intolerable heat of the room, he disappeared behind the pneumatic trough, to wipe the acid from his face and hands.

Further experiments were out of the question; everything on the table was broken and spilt, and the fumes of foul gas were insupportable. Bruce was engrossed with his burnt fingers, and the *lecture*, as it had been styled, was abruptly brought to an end!

CHAPTER VI.

'Le monde est rempli de gens qui portent des sons à l'oreille sans rien dire à l'esprit.'

APTAIN EGERTON hastened to join his friends while the crowd dispersed. He was astonished at the extraordinary excitement of the Honourable Jack, whom he found stamping up and down the side-room, anathematizing the whole apparatus and materials of the lecture as 'rotten,' and a 'clear swindle,' and himself as the innocent victim of 'cruel fate.'

'It might have been w—worse,' Bruce says gently.

'Worse! it couldn't—simply couldn't have been!' Jack replies fiercely, and then muttered to himself, 'When I saw *her* smiling—laughing—yes—she was—I felt—done for. Ha, Egerton,' as he caught sight of his friend, and rallying himself into almost immediate self-control, 'I hope you've enjoyed th—e—th—what are the people saying? Are they all out of the place yet? Is the Colonel gone? a—nd'—

'The Colonel asked me to say to you,' answered Captain Egerton, 'that as you must be hot he thinks you should take a seat in his brougham rather than on the coach.'

Jack brightened; his self-importance leaped back into its usual place. After all, he was himself—his own wealthy, well-born self. A slight failure at a chemistry lecture—pshaw!—that need not affect him after all!

Giving directions to his servant to look after everything, he hastened into the hall, all trace of discomfiture gone, and

exclaiming, 'Well, I hope you have all enjoyed the evening!' succeeded in raising, by his own apparent *nonchalance*, the rather depressed spirits of his relatives.

'Quite as much as we expected,' said Adelaide, who had scouted from the first the notion of Jack lecturing on—anything.

'You have made a complete mull of yourself,' said Hilda hotly. 'I never suffered such agonies in my life before, and Rose has been nearly choked with laughing, while poor Gerty'—

'Come along,' broke in Colonel Ellerslie; 'it's time we were off. Jack, you come with us, and stay the night. I want to consult you about one or two matters.'

Jack glanced at Gerty, who had turned to speak to Captain Egerton.

'I have been thinking,' she is saying to him, 'so much of what you said to me to-day; but I don't understand. What a glorious sky!' as they moved to the door, and looked up into the clear moonlight. 'I feel such a longing, such a breaking off from things here!'

'May I come and see you, Miss Ellerslie?' asked Egerton respectfully, as he handed her into the carriage.

'I shall be so glad,' she answered warmly.

'Well, Gerty,' said Jack, as they drove away, 'you must not take my first lecture as a standing specimen of my powers. It wasn't so bad after all, Colonel, eh?'

'By no means—by no means; but you should have had that clever fellow Brown as your assistant; he would have pulled you through.'

'Bruce did very well,' said Gerty, who has a growing dislike to Jack, 'for him; I'm sure he did his best. But very few can lecture decently.'

'Then you don't think I did so badly?'

'I didn't say that.'

'But you meant it; and, Gertrude,' in a low voice,—the Colonel had dropped asleep,—'if *you* are pleased, I don't care

what the world says! you are so literary a—nd—clever, and I want to like what you like—and'—

'O Papa, look at that splendid aurora!' exclaimed Gerty, thoroughly rousing her father, and determined to change the conversation. 'Did you ever see a more brilliant sky?' and she kept her companions absorbed during the rest of the drive by her animated questions and remarks on the planets, the stars, the currents of air, and the phenomena of the clouds.

'My next lecture shall be on astronomy, Gerty,' said Jack, as he helped her to alight; 'what an awful lot you do know!'

'*I* know! Oh no—no! I'm just panting for knowledge, and,' in a mournful tone, 'I don't know where to get it!'

'I'll help you,' said Jack desperately, for her indifference to himself, and what he called her 'proud superiority,' stung him to the quick. 'I'm becoming a perfect walking compendium dictionary, or whatever you call it. I'm beginning to know a lot about everything.'

'Really!' said Gerty scornfully, as she hastened into the bright warm drawing-room, where refreshments were laid out. 'This *is* pleasant after the odour of phosphorus, and the mortification'—and some words of her favourite Bacon came to mind, where in substance he says, 'A little learning inclineth men's minds to pride and scepticism, but depth of philosophy bringeth them to humility and religion.'

Gertrude went to her room, but not to sleep. Her thoughts passed quickly over the ridiculous exhibition of the evening to her morning walk with the interesting stranger, who seemed so little surprised at the sudden revelation made to him of her listlessness and weariness, and was so roused to sympathy for her condition. She tried to recall all she had said, and more particularly what *he* had said to her; and a glad feeling took possession of her as she remembered the kindly look of interest in his dark-grey eye as he listened to her expressions of weariness of her present life, and of deep disappointment at

her father's refusal to allow her to exchange it for even a few bright months abroad.

'There is something about that man quite different from the Jacks and Bruces of our humdrum county,' she thought. 'He inspires one with respect and admiration, and I feel,' thought poor Gerty, 'as if I could ask him to help me to get on. I am so glad we are to dine at the Hall to-morrow.'

There was no party next evening; Gertrude and the Colonel, Mrs. Heywood and Rose, being the only additions to the family party. Lady Morell, who delighted in Gertrude, and who made her much more of a *confidante* than her own 'horsey' daughters, dragged her, as soon as she entered the drawing-room, to the recess, to pour into her ear a few domestic matters of interest.

'Adelaide and Hilda are to be married in a couple of months, my dear,' she began. 'Their lords and masters to be —they won't have a sinecure—won't wait any longer. The girls say they must have another otter-hunt or two, and then that a month's honeymoon will bring them to Ireland in February for the hunting there. What my life has been since their father died, and only the boys were left to go with them to the meets, I cannot try to tell. But they are dear good girls, all the same,' with a tear trembling in her motherly eye, as she looked at her two dashing daughters, radiant in their flowing evening dresses, describing to Jack the perils of their homeward drive from Kilbarton the night before.

'Mick (the coachman) was dead drunk,' said Hilda; 'so I mounted the box again, though I had intended to be driven home, and we flung Mick inside. If it hadn't been for Captain Egerton, who got in a while beside him, and managed somehow to control him, he would have been quite boisterous. As it was, Mrs. Heywood was on the verge of hysterics, I understand. Neither Fitz nor Tyes would take the reins; I fancy the lecture upset their nerves. And, O Gerty, the row these spaniels made; the moon excited them, I believe,

for they barked and yelped. It was a hard draw, I can tell you, keeping the horses in.'

'The noise was something frantic,' said poor Lady Morell, who, it may be remembered, had remained at home with headache. 'I had just dropped over into a nice little nap when I was roused by the horn, and the dogs, and the stamping and prancing of the horses; but,' kindly, 'it soon passed off when I heard they were all safe home.'

'Mother is always taken by surprise when we all turn up without broken bones,' said Hilda. 'She expects each time we go out to be a child poorer before sunset, but we turn up like the bad shilling,—eh, mother mine?'

At dinner Gertrude found herself seated between Jack, of course, and Captain Egerton. Rose, who was on Egerton's other side, contrived to keep him occupied in talk with herself, while Jack plied Gertrude with spasmodic thrusts about books and science, displaying to her intellectual and well-stored mind a most curious medley of ignorance, together with a certain smart smattering of knowledge on the subjects upon which he touched. For, at the best, it was but 'touching,' in no sense handling or discussing.

'What are you busy with just now?' asked Jack, after bringing to the front the miscellaneous half-dozen volumes he had lately dipped into.

'With this wing of a fowl, or, as our cook calls it, a "fool!"' said Gerty, dropping her eyes on her plate, from the palpable *soupçon* of *double entendre* that was in her sarcastic tone.

'No, no, I mean books!' said Jack eagerly. 'You are always at them.'

'Indeed, I'm not!'

'I've just been reading that fellow's Essays. What's his name again? He writes on all sorts of people and things. I heard you praising the book one day, and I ordered it at Page's. Oh, you know who I mean!'

'How can I? Who *do* you mean?' indifferently, for this

sudden literary fit would, she knew, pass off like all Jack's other fits.

'It begins with Mac—not Macduff, no, nor Macdonald. Confound it, I had it this moment!'

'Macaulay,' said Gerty, with a flash of scorn in her eye. 'Surely you read *his* books at school or college, Jack? You *are* far behind; every schoolboy knows *his* works.'

This was crushing. He had stumbled at the outset of what he meant to be a very literary conversation upon an author whose works he did not know; and all hope of engaging Gerty on any further book talk was cut short, as Egerton, grasping a moment's pause in Rose's flow of gossip and scandal, turned to Gerty, and expressed his hope that she had not suffered from the heated room the night before.

'The whole thing was enough to have put one in a high fever,' she answered, glancing at Jack, who had taken refuge in Mrs. Heywood, and was recovering from his discomfiture amid her platitudes and flattery. 'But the drive home amid the glories of that sky cooled and calmed one's heart. When the flowers and leaves go in the autumn, I transfer my admiration to the skies. They are magnificent in these autumn nights; yet, sometimes, they overwhelm me, Captain Egerton. I used to wish to be up there, away from the troubles and tiresomeness here; but now I lose myself terribly amid the vastness and the unknownness. If one was just sure where heaven is! But perhaps some day Piazzi Smythe, or Clark Maxwell, will be able to help us about it! What do you think about that?' turning her fair, eager face round upon him. 'Do you ever lose yourself—your reckonings—among the starry skies?'

Captain Egerton did not immediately reply, and Gertrude went on. 'It's curious I never feel the same quite during the day. Everything looks bright and clear, but—

"At night, when 'tis dark and lonely,"

a dreadful, awesome feeling sometimes comes over me when I look up at the heavens. I do dislike the darkness and the

night. I'm not even very fond of the moon; she shines well enough in her own way, and it's better than nothing; but her light hints at illimitable space, which makes one's brain reel.'

'But I thought you said the skies calmed you last night!' said Captain Egerton.

'So they did, after all we had gone through. You know what I mean, Captain Egerton; but you may be fascinated yet bewildered by things. My usual feeling in studying the stars and admiring them, *is* pleasure and interest, but at times I am overwhelmed.'

'But,' in a low and earnest tone, 'if you felt that they belonged to your best Friend, and are His workmanship, the fear would give place to reverent admiration and delight.'

'Friend! Captain Egerton. God made them all. Our Heavenly Father.'

'Christ, the Father's dear Son, Miss Ellerslie, is He who hung the spacious vault with those heavenly lamps; whose hand painted the flowers, who created us, and whose hands uphold and preserve all. And these same sacred hands were struck through with the cruel nails upon the cross, that He might save us from the curse and condemnation of sin.'

'Is He *your* friend, Captain Egerton?' asked Gertrude, under her breath, as she fixed her eyes upon his face.

'He is, Miss Ellerslie, and He will be yours too, if you will but ask Him.'

At this moment, Lady Morell nodded down the table to Mrs. Heywood, and the little troop of ladies swept out of the dining-room.

As a matter of course, when there were no strangers, the girls led the way straight to the billiard-room. Lady Morell, whose headache had partly returned, declaring that the click of the balls made her nervous, and the dogs fidgetted her to-night, while the smoking stifled her, turned into the drawing-room, having extracted a promise from Gertrude to come in half an hour to sing to her some of her soothing songs.

'Well, girls,' said Hilda, as they gathered round the blazing fire, and a couple of favourite dogs took their accustomed places at their young mistresses' feet, 'what is your verdict upon Jack's friend?'

'Jack's friend!' exclaimed Gerty, looking quickly up.

'Yes. Aren't they like, in *physique*, pursuits, everything,—eh, Gerty?' with a sly look.

'How in the world did Jack come to know him?' asked Gerty.

'Did you never hear? Oh yes, you must remember last year, when Jack was visiting the Talbots, he went with them to skate on the Serpentine, and of course he hoped to distinguish himself there, as elsewhere, and would go on a warned place, and fell in. Not a Talbot, or soul of any kind, tried to help him, and, just as he was sinking, this grand man, at the risk of his own neck, dived for him, and fished him out of the hole. No wonder mother has been dying to see him! If only he hunted, he would be perfect. He rides beautifully, and knows a horse as well as—as I do.'

'He is so remarkably handsome,' said Adelaide, playing with Corso and Dash; 'and he knows an awful lot.'

'He is rich, is he not?' asked Rose, trying to look indifferent.

'Dreadfully,' said Hilda, 'and of good family, and—no encumbrances—not a soul to bother any wife with. If I hadn't promised Fitz—poor old Fitz—I would have set my cap for him on the spot. Gerty, you span a good long yarn with him to-night. What was he saying?'

Gertrude coloured, and said with feeling, 'Oh, so much! I'm trying to remember it all. He *is* good and noble!'

'So he is, but he's queer,' said Adelaide; 'he's dismally queer, not only in the things he does *not* do, but in the things he does and says. I heard him and mother talking this morning about our county, and what was doing. Mother—meek soul—primed him with our meets and balls, not to speak of the weddings, and the chit-chat all about the place. He heard

her so patiently, and then quietly remarked, "And the spiritual life, Lady Morell, what of it?" And then mother told him how Mr. Shaw was abroad, and how we had just young curates; a—n—d I came away, and left mother to battle the watch alone. It wasn't in my line, you know, Dash, darling!' bending her head caressingly over the knowing little black face in her lap,—'not in my line.'

'He seems to do what few of us trouble ourselves with,' said Gertrude; 'he takes an interest in people.'

'In you, Gerty, evidently,' said Hilda, who likes Gerty as much as she dislikes Rose.

'Gerty,' she went on, 'whatever will you do when everybody leaves? Adelaide and I slope the month after next, Captain Egerton away,—but perhaps he is coming back for our weddings,—Rose abroad, and Fred in Edinburgh. How I pity you! on my heart, I do, left to read cookery-books and mix up sauces with Mrs. Cookson!'

'Hilda, you know that isn't true,' exclaimed Adelaide. 'Think of the way Gerty studies and works,—German, Italian, music, reading,—a perfect dungeon of learning! I heard Jack saying to Captain Egerton to-day, Gerty, that your mind was as lovely as your person. I must say, men are far more generous than we women are. Fancy Rose saying that of you, Gerty, to me!'

Rose bit her lip; the Misses Morell lit their cigars; and Gerty, remembering her promise to Lady Morell, glided away; while Rose, hearing the gentlemen's approach, and uncertain whether or not Captain Egerton would admire her as a smoker, poised her cigarette doubtfully in her hand.

How her *pose* might have struck him we cannot tell, for he did not come near the billiard-room. Hearing strains of music in the drawing-room, he turned his steps thither, while the others hastened to join 'the girls,' with the exception of Colonel Ellerslie and Jack, who had county matters of importance to talk over in the library.

Egerton glided into a dark corner in the bay-window at the

far end of the room, unobserved, and listened, spell-bound, to Gertrude's singing.

Her voice, a mellow, rich contralto, poured out some deep heart feelings in the purest Italian words. What a picture she was! Her slight, elegant figure draped in white, with white camellias in her hair and dress; no colour about her but the lovely rose-blush on her soft cheek, and the lustre of her deep-blue eyes.

She was pouring out the cry of an imprisoned heart for liberty—light, 'Where, where is the light?' being ever the refrain.

Lady Morell sat drinking in the song, and the picture of the singer too.

'Oh, Gerty, how it soothes me to hear you sing! What is that?'

'It is a canzonetta, Auntie'—the Ellerslies call their father's cousin by this title as more respectful; 'it is a canzonetta composed upon the last words uttered by Goethe, when he exclaimed, "Light, light! more light!" I have sometimes been puzzled to divine what he really wanted when he cried for light. What do you think about it?' addressing Captain Egerton, who had moved towards the piano. 'On the principle that great minds think humbly of themselves, was he counting all his acquired knowledge as nothing, compared with what he thirsted for? He was so self-satisfied, that *I* have dismissed that solution.'

'The words struck me differently,' said Egerton earnestly, 'and impressed me more than all the rest of his biography. They seem to me rather to have been the impassioned cry of one who, at that solemn moment, felt that, notwithstanding his intellect, his genius, he had missed his way through life, mistaken the object of his existence, and found himself at its close in the darkness. Like a man sailing to a distant shore through a difficult sea, with rocks ahead and storms above, but with the compass to guide him, and the lighthouse to flash its steady light across the waves, but who, slighting both,

misses his way, and is at last swallowed up in the very sea which might have borne him safe to his goal, so does the man who—losing himself amid the fascinations of intellect or pleasure—neglects alike the dictates of conscience and the Word of God, and walking in sparks of his own kindling, which at last die out, finds himself in the darkness of a lost eternity.'

'But,' said Lady Morell, 'you don't disapprove of intellect, Captain Egerton?'

'I!' exclaimed Egerton, smiling; 'oh no! Intellect was the rock against which my frail bark was once nearly shivered. But, thank God, when the storms beat over me, they drove me into the one sheltering Rock, in whom is righteousness, and wisdom, and strength.'

'But,' chimed in Lady Morell, 'you don't disapprove of poetry, and history, and a good rousing novel when one is dull? Nothing is so reviving as an exciting romance.'

'I am devoted to reading,' answered Egerton; 'but such things no longer master me. My books are my best friends, and are meant, I am sure, to be so, but merely as means to an end.'

'You'll be publishing some day,' said Lady Morell knowingly. 'I've often told Gerty she should. You've no idea, Captain Egerton, what a student Miss Ellerslie is. Her father can't get her to hunt, or ride even sometimes, she's so busy with her books and music.'

'Oh, Aunt Julia!' said the girl, colouring deeply, 'you don't know how little I do.'

'And as for balls and dances,' Lady Morell went on, far off from the line of thought which was absorbing her young friends, 'she doesn't seem now to care for *them*. What she's to come to I don't know. She's far too good for the place.'

'I've had two seasons of ball-going, and I'm sick of the whole thing,' answered Gerty warmly. 'I would like, I sometimes think, to be a nun, if it was only to have time to think out things.'

'Goodness, child! don't talk such dreadful nonsense. A nun! You'd soon repent of *that*. A girl of your spirit to be tied down, and made to do things you hated, and to obey whether you chose or not! You would soon rebel, and fly in their face, and then'—

'I should be sent to the dungeon, and there's plenty of quicklime there,' interrupted Gerty. 'Well, it would only be the end of an utterly useless life.'

'The end, Miss Ellerslie?' said Egerton.

'If only it might be!' answered Gerty dreamily; 'and yet one shrinks from annihilation too.'

'It's a queer thing life,' said Lady Morell, 'a remarkably queer thing.'

'But,' said Gerty, returning to her old day-dream about nuns, and anxious to hear Captain Egerton's views, 'if one has to be good some time, which, I suppose, we all have, being a nun, however disagreeably you put it, Aunt Julia, would help one quickly on, only one would have—*I* should have, at least—to make up my mind to lifelong nundom; for I know *I*, if left to the freedom of my own will, never could go on long being religious and good unless *made* to.'

'Yes,' interrupted Egerton, 'you could.'

Gerty glanced keenly at him as she murmured, 'You don't know me or you would never say so, Captain Egerton. I am different from other people, I sometimes think. *They* seem satisfied enough with the humdrum life they lead; *I*, with all my books and thoughts, never am, but I'm simply the most restless, tired mortal living. What do you feel about it, Captain Egerton? Do you never fail in trying to be good? and what power keeps you right?'

'There is such an infinite distance between mere morality and the religion of Jesus Christ,' said Egerton gravely and very earnestly, 'and the subject is so vast, that I hardly know where to begin. The power of the one seems like the cold, sleepless eye of the jailer watching the prisoner in his cell, and ready to swoop down on any infringement of the

law; the other, like the warm love of a friend, rousing and sustaining in happy activity the whole energy of our being. I saw it well put in one of Joseph Cook's "Lectures," where, speaking of the recognition on the part of the ancients of the difference between morality and religion, he illustrates the great subject by the contrasted legends of Ulysses and Orpheus. Ulysses, when sailing past the isle of the Sirens,—whose songs charmed often to their destruction all who listened to them,—filled his own ears and those of his crew with wax, to keep out the alluring strains. Next he had himself bound to the mast with knotted thongs, and on pain of his severest displeasure forbade his sailors to unloose him, even should he in the moment of temptation bid them free him. And thus, according to the subtle Grecian legend, he sailed safely past the dangerous spot. But when Orpheus, in search of his golden fleece, went by this island, he discoursed grander, sweeter music than any the far-famed Sirens could produce, and so satisfied himself and charmed his crew that they passed the sea-nymphs' shore unallured—nay, even with disdain. It was the classic way of expressing what one of your greatest doctors of divinity, Lady Morell, has so forcibly put; it was "the expulsive power of a new affection."'

As the thirsty flower drinks in the falling shower, so did Gertrude Ellerslie drink in Egerton's words; while Lady Morell, whose classic recollections were rather hazy and confused, exclaimed, as she rang for tea,—

'Well, Morpheus is not such a bad genius after all. I only wish *I* could attract him a little more than I usually do. "The arms of Morpheus,"—quite a proverb now.'

Presently the girls came rattling into the room, followed by the gentlemen and the dogs. Rose glanced at the trio by the fire, and a sharp pang struck her heart as she took in the flushed look on Gerty's face and the absorbed, earnest expression on Captain Egerton's. *He* had never entered the billiard-room, where *she* had been watching for his coming, and extracting meanwhile from Hilda what scraps of informa-

tion she could about his pursuits and manner of life generally. It was after all but scraps; for Hilda was unsatisfactory on points which did not immediately concern herself.

'We've had a splendid game, mother,' said Adelaide, addressing Lady Morell; 'Fitz and I beat Hilda and Sam, and Dash looked on the whole time. If only I had leisure, I'm sure I could teach them to play. Isn't Dash intelligent-looking, Captain Egerton?'

'Sharp little creature,' answered Egerton, while Jack sat down beside Gerty.

'I'm sure dogs have sense of some kind or other,' went on Adelaide. 'A friend of Jack's in London, who goes into the City every morning to business, found at the 'bus door one day a poor starved dog. It looked up in his face so piteously, that he was attracted by it, and took it with him to the nearest butcher's shop, where he bought some meat, and saw the creature eat it. Next morning, there was his friend, punctually awaiting the arrival of the 'bus; again he fed it, and so on for weeks. From being a skeleton, it grew to be a fine, handsome dog. In this improved state, one morning, when the gentleman alighted, he found Terry accompanied by a weak, puny little wretch of a friend. Terry glanced up appealingly at him, and then down at his companion, saying as plainly as words could speak, "Won't you do for my friend what you have done for me?" What was there *not* there? A combination of memory, hope, calculation, and brotherly love!'

'I had a fox-terrier,' said Captain Egerton, 'that belonged originally to a neighbour of my father in the country. I was at his house one day, when our friend said, looking at the dog as he lay on the hearth-rug, "That creature is old and stupid now, I must get it put out of the way." I was fond of the animal, and said, "Oh, rather let me have him." "Certainly, if you like," was the reply, and not another word did either of us speak on the subject. When I got home, a distance of three miles, the creature met me at the door!'

'Captain Egerton knows about dogs as well as horses,' said Adelaide to Rose; 'quite sparkling in his way.'

'Gertrude is going to sing,' said Jack to his mother.

'Could we try our new duet, do you think, Gerty? mother likes it so.'

'If you choose,' answered Gerty absently and indifferently.

The Morells are all more or less musical, and Jack, if he has not much of a voice, has a good ear, and some training.

While they are seeking out their music, Rose contrives to seat herself near Egerton, on the plea of showing him some photographs of the neighbouring scenery of which they had been talking.

At the first note of Gertrude's voice, however, Egerton's interest in the photographs wanes. He turns towards the piano, and his eyes rivet themselves upon her.

'Do you like that?' Rose asked, as the song ended.

'*Like it?*'

'Yes; Mr. Morell sings well, does he not? but his voice is too weak for Gertrude's.'

'They went beautifully, I thought,' said Egerton; 'they are accustomed to sing together?'

'Oh yes! Mr. Morell would walk on his head to please Gerty. He takes up whatever she does, but never makes much of it; you know they are en'—

But before the false word passed her lips, the Ellerslies rose to leave, and Egerton, who waited anxiously for the word, which did not come, but the meaning of which reached him, went to assist—not Gertrude to her carriage, but Mrs. Heywood and Rose.

CHAPTER VII.

'She must be told of it, and she shall; the office,
I'll take it upon me.'

'I ASKED Bruce and Captain Egerton to come over to-day,' said Colonel Ellerslie a week later to his daughter, one morning at breakfast. Captain Egerton had, to Lady Morell's infinite delight, got his leave extended, and he and Gertrude have had some pleasant meetings, though not many satisfactory talks together.

'Take an extra half-hour at the cookery-book, I beg of you, Gertrude,' he added, 'and put a few fresh ideas into Mrs. Cookson's head. That soup last night was vile, and the fish barbarously done. How in the name of wonder a woman, the business of whose life it is to cook, fails as she does, especially when one wants something good to the front, I know not! I've had her an hour already this morning. She threatens to give up her place!'

'O Papa!' exclaimed Gertrude in distress, 'do try and be pleased with her. She's so greatly better than the run of cooks, and hasn't such a fearful temper as the last, and doesn't mind me interfering, a—n—d'—

'Well, look over these chapters on soups,' handing to Gerty the cookery-book he has been studying, 'and pitch into her; and bring her up to the mark,' he added in a more gentle tone, glancing at his daughter's troubled face as he left the room.

He laid the cookery-book on the side-table near another book, *Fénélon's Letters*, a copy of which Captain Egerton had given Gertrude as bearing upon the subject of some of their recent talks. She looked at the volumes, and a momentary struggle ensued in her mind.

Duty led to one; desire, and something more tender within her, drew her to the other.

'What *can* it signify,' she mentally exclaimed, 'whether or not there is a *soupçon* of chutney in the soup? I can't conceive how my father can tell so immediately if it is there or not! and oh, I do want to know how to get light'—

She laid the cookery-book down, and lifted the limp volume. 'Just a peep,' she said to herself.

But a voice somewhere said so distinctly, 'Not now,' that, starting, she involuntarily turned round to see who spoke.

But she was—alone.

'Alone!' did we say? Ah! God was there, not only in His omnipresence, but in her being, His voice—her conscience—speaking plainly out. She yielded to its dictates, and laying down the treasured volume, lifted the obnoxious cookery-book, and for the next half-hour laboured at its lessons. Having mastered the various receipts wanted for to-day's *ménu*, she rose with a vexed, irritated look on her face, and glancing at the timepiece, discovered she was half-an-hour late for Mrs. Cookson. Flinging the cookery-book passionately on the table, while the hot tears started to her eyes, she muttered, 'What a miserable, trifling life for one with a mind—a soul! all to-day, all my life perhaps, I shall have to potter on like this!'

Then seizing the innocent victim of her indignation, she sallied forth to interview Mrs. Cookson. She found her in the kitchen, cross and defiant-looking. She did not speak when Gertrude entered, but turned leisurely round to the clock, the hands of which pointed to 10-50, and then silently faced her young mistress with a look of conscious superiority.

'Colonel Ellerslie says you forgot the chutney in the mullagatawny soup last night,' said Gertrude pleasantly, but

without any preamble dashing on her attack, 'Please don't forget it to-day!'

'But, Miss,' said Mrs. Cookson promptly, 'the Colonel said to me when we was fixing of the mulliglitawny, he said—says he—mix in always, with your ingredients, a few grains of common sense—*always*, says he; so, Miss, when I come for to think over the mulliglitawny, I thought that the chutney, being of a hot temperament as well as the mulliglitawny'—

'Mullagatawny!' interrupted Gertrude impatiently, with a slight stamp of her foot.

'Mulliglitawny!' said Mrs. Cookson, quietly ignoring the correction. 'I thought them two hots is too much of a good thing; so, as the French says, I gave the chutney its con-gee.'

'Oh, by the bye!' said Gertrude, the murdered French of poor cook recalling the scene of the 'brained coquettes,' 'do, for goodness' sake, teach Simmonds how to pronounce the dishes; you never heard such things as he calls them!'

'That's none of my department, Miss,' said Cookson, rearing her head. 'I can cook—and speaks French myself, for I was twelve months in a Paris hotel, and they said I picked up the tongue amazin'; but I does *not* take on hand to drive things into thick heads. Mr. Simmonds knows a good wine from a bad, that he does; but as for French, hey-lass!' (*hélas*) and she applied her apron to her face with an air that said as plainly as words, 'hopeless!'

Gertrude stood for a moment irresolute, feeling herself on the horns of a dilemma, her father's displeasure on the one hand if things went wrong, and the conceit and tiresomeness generally of Simmonds and the cook on the other; while the waste of time over such trifles and nonsense was, as usual, intolerable.

She grasped the cookery-book in a tight clutch, and pressed her lips firmly together, to keep back the angry words which flew to them.

After a moment she said, 'Well, cook, I don't know what I'm to do if you don't try to please Papa. What does it signify

whether *you* think chutney should go into the soup, or camphor, or chalk, if *he* wants it. I'm sure, if it was only wholesome, I'd put anything under the sun into it to please him.'

'Against my professional ideas and experience, Miss!' Blazing up, 'I'd sooner give up my place on the spot than that!'

'Well, put it into the mullagatawny for to-day, *please*,' exclaimed Gertrude in a conciliatory sort of tone. 'I *must* get on. Let us arrange the rest for to-day.'

At last the bill of fare was adjusted, and Gertrude found her morning study stand her in good stead with the experienced cook, who remarked to her kitchen-maid, as Gertrude left the kitchen, that 'Miss Ellerslie had a deal of head knowledge about cookery, and that if only she cared a little more about it and was more patientful, she would come on.'

On regaining the library, Gertrude found that Bruce and Captain Egerton had arrived.

All hope of study for this day was at an end, yet her chafed spirit felt soothed by the sight of her new friend, and the hope that a quiet talk with him might be in store for her to-day.

'Jack desired me to say he'll come over in the afternoon.'

'Did he?' answered Gertrude impatiently; 'I thought he was going to hunt!'

'Yes, but he changed his mind when he heard we were coming here,' said Bruce, 'and said he was quite sure you would be glad to see him.'

'Indeed!' said Gertrude haughtily.

Then changing the subject, she said pleasantly, 'Cousin Helen is home, Bruce, and I am going to see her now; would you care for a walk?' Turning to Captain Egerton, 'You drove over, of course?'

Both gentlemen expressed their pleasure at the proposal, and Gertrude went for her jacket and hat.

'When did Miss Maitland come home?' asked Bruce as they set forth.

'Late last night,' answered Gertrude. 'She did not intend

coming for another week at least, but something has hurried her, and I had a message from her this morning, saying she was home. How glad I am she is back at last!'

'I have heard a great deal about Miss Maitland,' said Egerton. 'She seems universally respected and beloved.'

'By every one,' said Gertrude warmly. 'She is mother's friend and cousin, Captain Egerton,' she continued eagerly. 'She is everything to me, and has been ever since mother died!'

They walked along silently, Bruce having fallen behind to speak to a lame boy.

'How I wish you had known *her*,' at last Gertrude said softly. 'So many things you say are like the things she used to say, yet you never saw each other. I seem now always wanting to hear you speak, Captain Egerton,' looking up at him.

He smiled gravely.

'When I wanted to die and go away to where she was, and got dull and unhappy, Cousin Helen came—every day she came—and cheered and comforted me. How I loved her, and do love her better than any living being!' she added impetuously.

Egerton looked keenly at her.

'And she is so clever and gracious, but so unselfish and humble, and full of love and sympathy; and if you are happy, it seems to make her happy too; and if you are vexed, she understands it all, and is sorry for you; and even when I grow cross and angry, she seems to know all about it. And I always come away with a lighter heart than I go.'

'Does she live alone?'

'Oh no! she has heaps of people living with her, but she is alone just now for a little. St. Helen's is a gem of a place; but here we are,' as they came up to the lodge gate. 'I am thankful we live so close, I can come at any time.'

They found Miss Maitland in her *sanctum*, a small, well-proportioned room, into which the old butler ushered them.

'Darling!' said Miss Maitland, as she rose to welcome Gertrude, and folded her in a warm, loving embrace.

For a second the girl left herself in the dear arms, and then turned to introduce Captain Egerton.

Miss Maitland shook hands frankly with him, and found two cosy seats for her visitors near the fire.

Egerton glanced round the room, while Gertrude inquired about Miss Maitland's journey.

A well-filled book-case, the shelves of which seemed accustomed to having raids made upon them, a piano, an easel, and a davenport, at which Miss Maitland had been writing when they arrived, were prominent objects in the room. A small moveable book-stand was drawn near the davenport, on which Egerton's quick eye detected such volumes as Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, Dante, Milton, one or two new biographies and monthlies.

Round Miss Maitland there hung a sort of halo of repose, Egerton thought; and as he took in the tall, slight figure, the look of high breeding, together with the keen, intellectual eye, and the air of absorbed interest in what her companion was saying, he felt thankful that the motherless girl, in whom he was becoming so intensely interested, had such a friend, and within such easy reach.

Presently Miss Maitland turned to him, inquiring how long he had been at the Hall, and after the miscellaneous members of the Morell household.

'I have been away so long this season,' she added, 'that I have every one to ask for, though your letters, Gerty, have kept me well up to everything. She is a famous correspondent,' smiling kindly on Gertrude.

'There seems a general rejoicing at your home-coming,' said Egerton heartily.

A flush tinged Miss Maitland's pale cheek as she replied simply, 'And I am no less glad to be back to my regular work again.'

And then they glided into talk about the many Christian

schemes in London, where Miss Maitland had been staying; and by the end of the visit Miss Maitland and Egerton had become—friends.

Gertrude listened. At first she could follow their animated remarks about the Christian Institute for Young Women recently started in a west-end locality, of its success, and the home it had become to many friendless young women in the great metropolis.

Her eyes sparkled at the accounts Captain Egerton gave, in answer to Miss Maitland's questions, of the efforts, in his regiment, for the good of the soldiers, and of the ready response that many of the fine, brave men gave to the various schemes for their good; but when, from such general facts, he passed to one or two particular cases, in which, as he expressed it, the light had sprung up in the darkness, the marvellous light of Christ's gospel, she felt that she could follow the talk no more. They got into depths beyond her—they talked in a language foreign to her, and yet their whole souls seemed steeped in the subject.

'Yes, after all,' said Miss Maitland, as her visitors rose to go,—'after all, this is the errand on which one and all of us have been sent into the world—to get our own souls saved, and to help others to get theirs!'

'And what would be a poor, wearying failure of a life is redeemed and ennobled,' said Egerton, as he bade his new friend good-bye.

'What a friend!' exclaimed Egerton, as they walked away; 'a true Christian lady!'

'Yes,' exclaimed Gertrude, 'and you haven't seen half. She is so clever, and reads and studies. We do German and Italian together regularly; and since Miss Pryde, our governess, left us, I am a great deal at St. Helen's. Miss Pryde was old and prim, and very stuck up. All work and no play with *her*, and, much as I loved my books, I seem to have far more heart in working with Cousin Helen than I ever had with her. Good old soul! the past few years, since I have been left free

from *her*, have been, on the whole, fairly pleasant. But things go so cross-grainedly somehow with me, Captain Egerton! she went on ingenuously. 'I wonder if they go like that with you.'

'How do you mean?' he asked in a tone of genuine interest.

'Well, Miss Pryde comes and goes, and I reach one of my high hills. I am finished, Papa says. Fine finish, indeed! He says I have got enough of teaching, and am to simmer over what I have got, and go out a little into society, which means, go out to dinner with him everywhere within a dozen miles at least—he won't go farther to dinner; and there we meet all our neighbours, and round and round it goes, till we have exhausted every subject that the Lonshire people care to talk about, and cut up one another right and left! The dances are much the same, only that the hours are later and the people tiresomer. I have begged Papa to let me off from them this season.'

'And will he?'

'He hasn't said yet. Perhaps he may stand for the county at the next election. Oh, how I hope he won't! but if he does, then I shall have to go everywhere, I suppose, just as the Morells did when Sir Richard contested. Poor man! it killed him! Peak number two reached, and found to be very disheartening and unsatisfying. Then towering above me was one I coveted to reach, and which I am *sure* would have been satisfying. I wanted—panted—craved to go abroad. I have never been out of Great Britain, never. The Heywoods, our old friends, are going, and they asked me to accompany them. *Could* there have been anything nicer and better for me? I had set my heart upon it *so*, Captain Egerton, and I don't see a glimmer of reason why I should not go. I wrote to an aunt in London, a favourite sister of Papa's, to ask her to come here and stay in my absence. I don't like her, and she has no particular favour for me, so I thought it would fit in nicely for her to come when I was away, and keep Papa company. And she

wrote instantly to say how delighted she would be to come. Alas! I reckoned without my host; for when Mrs. Heywood asked Papa to let me go, he—refused!'

At this climax Gertrude fixed her eyes upon Egerton, and waited for him to speak; but he did not, so on she went. 'So I must try to lift my eyes off this peak, and every other peak, and to scramble on along the dull flats of my life as best I can; but it's hard lines, is it not? And, as I wrote to Cousin Helen, I've been so cross and impatient that everybody is hating me. And oh! one of the worst bits is to come yet. I wrote to Aunt Dorothy, to tell her I wasn't going, and all but said that we wouldn't expect *her;* but lo! back she writes that *her* plans are all made for her visit to the north, and that she means to come! And she pays such frantically long visits!'

'I feel much for your disappointment,' said Captain Egerton, 'very much, and yet, and yet, I am sure this new peak on which you had set your heart would have proved disappointing too.'

'It wasn't,' said Gertrude eagerly, 'as if I had wanted to go in for gaiety, or things like that. I wanted to go where I could follow out my bents, improve my mind, and cultivate my talents; travel, see something, and perhaps become something more than I am, at least.'

'You think you could shape your life better than your Heavenly Father can,' said Egerton gravely.

'Captain Egerton!' said Gertrude, flushing deeply.

'I am but putting into words the substance of your own candid recital, Miss Ellerslie.'

'But if you find within you longings after things you can't get where you are, does it not seem that you are meant to try to go where they may be met and satisfied?'

'In certain circumstances I should say yes.'

'But not in mine?'

'Not in yours.'

'Then you think I should quench all those passionately loved

tastes and longings, and go on here all my life, amid its humdrum monotony?'

She stopped, and looked up at him anxiously, as if deprecating the answer she felt sure would come.

'I think, Miss Ellerslie, that if you had the Tree of Life rooted in your heart and home, it would sweeten the waters which are so bitter to your taste.'

'Then you don't think I should give up my—my—books, and mind work?'

'By no means.'

She drew a sigh of relief.

'Then surely you—such an intellectual man as you—must think it a sinful waste of time to be pottering over cookery-books, and keeping abreast of all the new *ménus* that *will* always be cropping up?'

'Indeed I do not. Pardon my plainness, Miss Ellerslie, but I think a Christian will try to do the most irksome duty that falls to his hand in the best and most perfect way.'

'Do you?' thoughtfully. 'My idea is, that if a door stands open for you to get out of a tiresome life for a while,—of course, I was coming home again,—that you might walk straight in, and be thankful!'

'Conscience and prayer, and the Word of God, must, however, decide for one whether this supposed door is open for any other purpose than to be a test of our obedience. Jonah, when he had fled from God's command, found a vessel in the harbour, with her sails flowing and anchors up, starting for Tarshish, the opposite direction from Nineveh, where God had bidden him go. The circumstance fitted in with the bent of his inclinations; perhaps he tried to trick himself into the notion that it was a providential pointing for him to go on board. He must have winked hard to see it in that light. You know the result of his disobedient act. He is surely a beacon to warn men against the sin and danger of wilfully construing events which assimilate with their own longings into providential leadings in the direction of those desires.'

A glimpse into a new region of thought was given to Gertrude's mind as he spoke; then sadly she said, 'I know nothing about those refined sorts of distinctions, Captain Egerton. Do many understand them? I believe Cousin Helen will, but nobody else about here seems to do anything but just try to get what they like best, and keep clear of what is disagreeable. Stay; I do believe Bruce has some of these views,—poor Bruce; but he has such an uncomfortable way of putting things, as, for instance, when he said to me after Papa had refused to let me go, that he thought if two ways were put before us to choose between, that the right one to take would, almost to a dead certainty, be the more disagreeable one, or the most self-denying. I told him to go away instantly, he provoked me so dreadfully, and yet I do believe he does it himself.'

Then turning to her companion as they just then reached the Fort, she said simply, but with deep feeling, 'I see that you and Cousin Helen have a stimulus, a great good of which I know nothing; and with a pleading look in her wistful eyes, she murmured, 'Help me—help me to find a rest, and an aim, and a stimulus such as you both have.'

CHAPTER VIII.

There are in this loud stunning tide
  Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
  Of the everlasting chime,
Who carry music in their heart
Thro' dusty lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holier strain repeat.'

IT is a great blessing, whether at the time we realize it or not, to have some one in our circle of friends so distinctly and consistently a Christian that he is known and read of all men. A great additional cause of gratitude will be, if this exceptional friend be outstanding intellectually or even socially. A cultivated and refined Christian will have more influence for good than one who is uneducated and uncouth. Hence the strong incentive to all Christians conscientiously to find out what their peculiar gifts and talents are, and to put them out; not to wrap this one or the other up in a napkin, and bury it in the ground, supposing it, perhaps, to be too secular to be available in the life of a Christian, but to use it, improve it, and trade diligently with it. Where no such talents as great intellect, music, painting, philosophy, etc. are bestowed, there are others, which will be discovered by the careful seeker, and they will be utilized and blessed.

In a case such as Gertrude Ellerslie's, all, humanly speaking, turned upon the fact that this new friend, who was revolutionizing her ideas, and leading her into divine paths of thought,

was a man of robust intellect, of singular strength of character, and of great refinement of mind and manners; unlike the men around her, who were ever flattering her, ever chiming in with her views, however fanciful, and ever ready to fall in with, in short, whatever might cause them to find favour in her sight. This Captain Egerton, while so respectful and gentlemanly in all his bearing towards her, told her plain things about herself, and made no apology for doing so. Had he not been all this morning showing her that her plans about herself were selfish! that she was striving to get away from her duty, and to plunge into favourite pursuits for her own aggrandizement!

'What he must think of me!' she soliloquized, as she took off her walking dress, and hastily prepared for lunch; and she felt that she cared more for what *he* thought than the good opinion of all the rest of mankind put together. 'If only I can get another talk with him, and ask him what moves and keeps him going in this wonderfully noble path. I don't care what he thinks of me, compared with—compared with getting help and light. He can give it, I am sure; oh! I am sure he can, and will!' A knock at her door, and the entrance of Rose Heywood cut short Gertrude's soliloquy.

'Ah, Rose!' she exclaimed, as she hastened to meet her friend.

'I've come over to spend the day with you, if I may,' said Rose. 'Mother has the lawyer with her, and I thought I might as well have a day with you, as our time is so short now.'

'Oh, I'm so glad!' said Gerty; 'but when do you start?'

'On Tuesday, and this is Thursday.'

'It was very good of you to come when you must have so much to do,' said Gerty heartily. 'Come along, there's the gong!' as Rose arranged her hair at the glass; 'Captain Egerton and Bruce are here.'

'Ah!' in a tone of well-affected surprise, and with a searching glance into her friend's fair, open face, 'Bruce, of course, is always about here, and Captain Egerton?'

'Papa asked them over,' said Gertrude simply. 'He wanted to have a talk with Captain Egerton about one of his brother officers, who is the son of an old friend of his.' As they entered the dining-room, they found Jack Morell, who had just arrived, in eager conversation with Colonel Ellerslie.

'Good morning, Gerty,' he said, hastening towards her, while a passing hasty recognition of Rose was all he had time to bestow on her.

'I want you to try the new bay mare I bought the other day; Barton brought her across for you.'

Gertrude coloured with vexation as she felt her hopes of another talk with Captain Egerton fade under this proposition, and she answered hastily,

'Oh! I can't really to-day.'

'Yes, you will; your father says you may.'

'No, I won't;' then in an undertone, 'Don't bother me, Jack.' She felt Captain Egerton's eyes were upon her, and this only increased her confusion.

Rose, who had gone round to Captain Egerton, drew him into talk about a sick child in the village whom he had been visiting, and compelled him to listen to her.

Gerty was on thorns during lunch lest anything should be wrong, dreading an outbreak from her father, before Captain Egerton, over any faulty dish. But all passed smoothly off, and her flushed face began to regain a little composure as they rose from table.

'Now, Gerty, you will come!' said Jack.

'I won't,' she was just stoutly saying, when her father interrupted her.

'I should like you to try the bay, Gerty; run and get on your habit.'

'I hate bays!' she said. 'Rose, you will come too, then; you can ride Donald.'

Very reluctantly Rose complied, while Jack looked black as thunder; but Gerty, often enough the victim of strong wills, had a strong will too, and she would not ride alone with her cousin Jack.

In a few minutes the little party was mounted, and started, while Colonel Ellerslie sallied forth with Captain Egerton and Bruce, to visit the kennels and stroll over the hills. They returned just in time to meet the riders, and to help the young ladies to dismount.

'Well, how did the bay go?' asked the Colonel of Gerty.

'Horridly. Just as I thought. I particularly dislike bays,' she answered, as she tripped up the steps.

They all gathered round the drawing-room fire while Gertrude made the tea. As Captain Egerton passed, she said hurriedly,

'Can we have another talk? Oh, that tiresome ride! I want so much to ask you—to ask you—what—where'—

'Has the tea warmed you?' said Jack, who came for another cup, glancing at her glowing face.

'Would you believe it,' turning to Captain Egerton, 'she was as pale and cold as that plate—all the way—wanted to turn, and goodness knows what, and the mare carried her so splendidly. It knew the difference between you and Hilda on its back,' looking admiringly at the pretty, sylph-like figure which showed to such advantage in the dark-grey riding-habit.

The afternoon wore away, as afternoons in country houses usually do between tea and dinner. No one felt inclined for anything; indeed, they all appeared to be very impracticable, Gertrude thought, and unready to do anything but hang about till the dressing-bell rang, and a general dispersion took place.

'Captain Egerton leaves the Hall on Tuesday,' said Rose, as the two girls went up-stairs.

Gertrude started.

'Are you sure?'

'Quite. He told me so to-day.'

'I thought he had got his leave still further extended. His battery is at Woolwich, is it not?'.

'Yes, but it will probably go abroad in spring, he says.'

'Rose!'

'Gerty!'

At this moment Arnot entered to assist the young ladies. She carried in her hand a bouquet of choice greenhouse flowers, which she said Mr. Morell begged Miss Gertrude would wear this evening.

Rose looked enviously at the jessamine and primulas and heaths, and thought how well they would look in her own dark hair.

'I shan't wear any flowers to-night,' said Gerty. 'Put them away, Arnot; or Rose, do you have them, they will look lovely in your hair.'

'But Mr. Morell?'

'He will never know they are his flowers,' said Gerty—'not he.'

So Rose arranged them tastefully in her own dress and hair.

Gertrude's toilette was soon completed, a soft, creamy, clinging dress with coral ornaments. A strange light is in her lovely blue eyes, and a deep glow is on her cheeks.

Leaving Rose in Arnot's embellishing hands, she hastened down-stairs to remind Simmonds of some special order of her father. Passing into the drawing-room, she found Captain Egerton alone. He was reading, but rose as she entered, and placed a chair for her.

'Are you going away?' she abruptly began. 'Away from Lonshire, I mean?'

'In a few days, I fear I must.'

'And I have so much to say to you—so much to ask, and there are always people interrupting us, and, a—nd — oh! Captain Egerton, tell me, tell me, what I am to do to be different, to do better in my home, a—nd'—

She involuntarily stretched out her hands, but he did not touch them. With a strong effort he repressed the emotion he felt, and while his face kindled with interest, he quietly said,

'You are, Miss Ellerslie, craving for what God is waiting to give you.'

'What?' eagerly.

'Himself.'

'Captain Egerton!'

'Yes, you are casting about for something to satisfy you. But God made your heart for Himself, Miss Ellerslie; and not all the world, if you had it, *could* satisfy that which He has formed for Himself.'

'But how? I know that God created me, and created everything, but?'—

'And has a right to the love and homage of your heart. Have you ever given Him your heart?'

'No, no.'

'Then you are under the condemnation of His broken law; and yet He loves you, and has given His Son to die for you, to bring you into reconciliation with Himself.'

'For me?'

'You acknowledge yourself to be a sinner, and it is for such Christ died. Miss Ellerslie, pray God to reveal His Son in you, and to give you faith to believe on Him. Promise me you will.'

'I will; oh, indeed I will!'

Over Gertrude Ellerslie that night, glad angels breathed the words, 'Behold she prayeth!'

Like the parched flower opening its petals to the falling shower, so did her heart turn towards the friend who was leading her into these new, wondrous paths, with an eagerness almost painful in its intensity. He was going away immediately, and she should be left among mists, she feared, for she was only as yet groping her way into the light; and it seemed as if Captain Egerton felt this too, for now, by mutual instinct, whenever they met, they passed from ordinary topics straight to the one subject of engrossing interest. Open as the day, Gertrude made no secret of her anxiety.

'I shall lose myself in mists of speculation as soon as I am left alone,' she said on one such occasion, when her father and she having ridden over to the Hall, she and Captain Egerton were for a few minutes together.

'Not if you have put yourself into Christ's hands,' said Egerton. 'Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.'

'Yes.'

'Christ will do His part. Be sure you do yours, and keep seeking Him.'

'Yes; and even now I feel something of His love. And oh, how lovely His works are!' glancing from the window at which they stood, out on the landscape before them, which, in the glow of the autumn sunshine, gleamed in golden tints.

'Beautiful, and all Christ's works. These hills, that stream, these clouds, the fringe on the weeds, the petals of these flowers, those songs in the woods—all His works!'

'How very good of Him to give us so much to enjoy and love!' said Gertrude, her beautiful face flushing with emotion. 'I never before thought of them all being Christ's work till you taught me. I do love Him!' and she gazed almost rapturously on the peaceful landscape before them.

Captain Egerton fixed his dark, searching eyes upon her. His heart beat violently, but he did not speak.

'I have been like a blind person about everything,' she said presently turning towards him; 'and might have been all my life, if you hadn't come, Captain Egerton. How can I thank you for all the *wonderful* trouble you have taken about me?'

He pressed his lips.

'And they are all the same,' glancing from the recess into the drawing-room.

'*All?* I think your Cousin Bruce is'—

'But he is so, so very, *very* tiresome, Captain Egerton. Good as gold, but he wearies me.'

'Oh, but he is a right genuine good man!'

'He is so much improved since he became religious; it was after his sister Alice's death he became so different'

before that, in his own stupid way, he was as worldly as Jack.'

'Morell has many thoughts about the great subject,' said Egerton contemplatively; 'your influence will be very great.'

'Mine?' with a gesture of impatience.

He looked inquiringly at her, then said hastily, as if afraid the opportunity would pass before the words would come, 'I was told—I understood, at least, that you were engaged to Morell'—

'I—oh—Captain Egerton, you didn't believe it?'

'I could only fear it, Miss Ellerslie!'

Their eyes met. 'Can you then be—fr'— But ere the word was uttered, Rose Heywood glided up, and passing her arm through Gertrude's, said, in the sweetest imaginable tones,

'Lady Morell wants you in the boudoir; she has had to go and lie down, this weather tries her terribly.'

'I will come, Rose,' said poor Gerty, almost piteously, with a 'go-away-for-a-moment' look.

But Rose, addressing Hilda, who appeared in the lawn outside, drew her in at the open window, whither Jack presently followed; and Gertrude, quivering with emotion, and afraid to trust herself to speak, gave one timid glance at Captain Egerton, and hastened to the boudoir.

'Must you really go on Tuesday, Captain Egerton?' asked Lady Morell of her guest, this evening at dinner. 'I had hoped our county—stupid though it be—had attractions enough to keep you a little longer still among us, though I am thankful for the few extra days you have been able to give us.'

'Indeed it has attractions of no ordinary kind, Lady Morell,' answered Egerton heartily, 'and much I wish I could have still further prolonged my visit; but I have had a long leave for this season, and am due at Woolwich on Wednesday.'

'Do you go abroad soon?'

'In spring, probably, we shall embark for India, but possibly sooner.'

'Well, but you will get a day or two, and come up for the

weddings, I hope,' persevered Lady Morell, who has not only taken the greatest liking for her guest, but has confided to him many family secrets, to his no small astonishment.

'I shall only be too delighted,' he replied, 'if possible, but one can never tell who may be off on leave.'

'I am in constant terror that the girls will break something or other when they are out hunting,' continued Lady Morell. 'What would they be like with arms in splints, or broken noses, on the wedding-day!'

'You wouldn't get rid of us then, mother,' said Adelaide; 'both Fitz and Tye would sheer off.'

'And they are to be married in brown silk dresses and hats!' Lady Morell went on. 'I wish you would put them off such notions, Captain Egerton. I shouldn't have thought I was married, nor, for that part, would their father either—if I hadn't had a white dress. White satin, and orange wreath, with honiton veil, was *my* costume, and your father said I looked like a—a—a—' But Lady Morell's emotion at the remembrance of her bridal days got the better of her, and the illustration died away on her faded lips. Yet her own departed joys did not dim her interest in the connubial prospects of others, although her daughters' determination to carry out *their* weddings in their own whimsical fashion seriously dulled the prospect in her eyes.

They are to be married in walking-dresses very early in the morning, to have 'a hunting-breakfast,' and start in time to be present at a race across the Border, having stakes in more than one of the horses.

'I have a heavy bet on Judy,' said Hilda, 'and I wouldn't miss seeing her for any number of weddings. I bought her at the great horse-fair at Singleton. Ada and I went— Jack always gets us to buy horses; he's no judge.'

'And just think, Captain Egerton,' said Lady Morell, rallying from her emotion; 'they went to the fair, bought four horses, each rode home on a saddleless horse, and each leading one.'

'Well, you wouldn't let Mick come with us; what else could we do?' said Hilda.

'The poor man's wife was dying, and he begged me to let him stay with her,' said Lady Morell.

'Duty before pleasure,' said Hilda warmly; 'we couldn't risk losing the horses for *that*.'

'Jack says you have a magnificent horse, Captain Egerton,' said Adelaide; 'why, in the name of wonder, don't you hunt?'

'I don't like it.'

'And you ride well, far better than any of the men hereabouts, and you are a V.C. man, brave and steady. *I* wouldn't care to *live* without hunting.'

'Riding is the best exercise going,' said Egerton; 'and your county abounds in beautiful rides. I have enjoyed them immensely.'

'But still you won't hunt,' said Hilda.

'No, I don't like it,' said Egerton.

'You'll never allow your wife to follow,' said Adelaide, who has the curiosity to know if he disapproves of ladies hunting; for Egerton had inspired all the womankind with admiration for himself, and his talents, and his famed bravery.

'Never,' he answered, smiling.

'Poor wretch!' said Hilda. 'You needn't look in *this* county for a helpmeet, then, Captain Egerton. Every woman among us, worth calling a woman, hunts.'

'No, Hilda,' said Lady Morell. 'You forget, Gertrude doesn't hunt.

'Ah well,' reddening, 'the exception proves the rule, and besides, that's her up-bringing. Her father would never let her, for fear of her being lamed, or deformed, or killed. If you let these paltry considerations enter into the question, you'd better keep off the field.'

'And that's precisely what he has done with Gerty,' said Lady Morell. 'She's a splendid horsewoman, and rides constantly with her father, but she never comes in for'—

'Croppers!' interrupted Hilda, 'adventures which make up, if not the business of life, at least its value and pleasure.'

'But she's a bold, fearless creature,' Lady Morell went on;

'no want of pluck in her, but just her father won't let her do dangerous things.'

'Much better, *mater*,' said Hilda, with a rare dash of tenderness in her eye, 'much better to have a dear noodle of a mother, who lets you do everything you want, than a sharp tyrant of a father who won't let you do any one thing you have a mind to. I'd put in stakes for my mother against any amount of fathers!'

'O Hilda,' said Lady Morell, with a look of gratification on her baby features, 'how can you speak so of your poor old mother!'

'Not much of a compliment after all,' said Egerton, who took no pains to conceal his astonishment at the way her daughters treated their garrulous but gentle mother, and whose warm interest and sympathy in all her motherly and domestic anxieties had endeared him to her heart.

Not less interested in him was Miss Maitland, on whom he had several times called since his first introduction. The refreshment to his spirit which a talk with her always gave was in the truest sense reciprocal.

Her quick woman's eye soon saw the profound interest created by Gertrude Ellerslie in Egerton's heart, and their mutual concern about her highest welfare drew them closely together.

'Gertrude is too honest to say what she does not feel,' said Miss Maitland to Egerton on the occasion next day of one of his last visits to her, and after he had told her of his hopes and conviction that Miss Ellerslie was now like-minded with themselves in the 'one thing.'

'Much.'

'But she is so easily influenced by those—she—she esteems, and—admires, that it is possible she might deceive herself as to the true state of matters.'

'I do not think so, Miss Maitland,' said Egerton warmly; 'but how is it that you and she never got upon these subjects? she is so much with you, and loves you so greatly.'

'We have more than once got upon them, as you may well believe,' replied Miss Maitland. 'She is the child of many prayers; her mother cast her upon me with her latest breath. But the subject was evidently so distasteful to her, really roused her opposition so keenly, that I have hitherto kept off it. She is thoroughly dissatisfied with her present life; her hungry heart is crying, craving for satisfaction and rest. We know who alone can fill and bless it.'

'I believe,' said Egerton, 'the deep dissatisfaction of her heart is now being met in the one way, Miss Maitland.'

Egerton's usually well-controlled heart had been in a strange tumult the two last days of his visit at the Hall. His interest in Gertrude had deepened with his influence over her; his conviction that she was now a child of grace, and was in the strait way, though groping each step, like one who has just stepped out of dungeon-darkness into the noon-day sunshine,—all drew him in strong affection towards her. Had he now found the treasure which probably every man, whether he knows it or not, believes in his heart of hearts he must find, to fill up and make complete his earthly lot? But would she—could she—the bright centre of attraction at home, and in the circle she adorned—could she return the love of such a one as he? If he could only see her once alone again, he thought he could decide.

Walking down Miss Maitland's little avenue this afternoon, he saw three figures approaching him, Gertrude, the Honourable Jack, and Bruce. The two former seemed in deep conversation, while Bruce, whose presence neither of his companions seemed to notice or mind, walked rather dejectedly along. At sight of Egerton the colour mounted to Gertrude's cheeks, and she sprang lightly forward to meet him.

'Ha, Egerton! one knows now whither you wend your footsteps in your solitary walks,' exclaimed Jack good-naturedly. 'Miss Maitland has thrown her glamour over *you*, has she?'

'Completely and utterly,' said Egerton, smiling; 'I have

been paying her a long visit—possibly my last one, I am sorry to say.'

'For the present only, old fellow,' said Jack.

'Well, I hope so,' said Egerton; 'that depends'—

'Oh, it depends on nothing! You *must* come for the weddings—mustn't he, Gerty?'

'Indeed I hope he will!' said Gerty.

'I was coming on to the Fort,' said Egerton; 'but'—

'The Colonel is at home,' said Bruce, 'I'll go back with you.'

'But *I'm* not at home, Bruce!' said Gertrude impatiently, and reddening all over as she spoke.

Egerton and Gertrude had little snatches of talk together during the walk home, enough to send a tumult of happiness through Gertrude's heart, and to encourage the most sanguine hopes in Egerton's.

When, in the quiet of her own room at night, she tried to analyze her feelings, and the new-born joy that filled her heart, she assured herself the root of it was in the divine grace and love she now tasted, while the delicious fruit she felt at liberty to eat was held out to her by Egerton's hand!

The morning before he was to leave Lonshire, Egerton appeared once more at the Fort.

'Colonel and Miss Ellerslie have gone out riding, sir,' said the footman; then, noting the look of disappointment on Egerton's face, he added, 'but they will be home to luncheon, sir, won't you walk in and wait?'

'Thank you,' in an absent tone, 'no. Will you give this note to Colonel Ellerslie?'

'Yes, sir,' said the man, and Captain Egerton walked away. As he sauntered along in an absorbed, abstracted state of mind, he was roused from his reverie by a silvery voice saying,

'Good morning, Captain Egerton! do you prefer walking among briars and thorns to keeping on the smooth road or

grassy path?' and Rose Heywood and her mother stood smiling before him.

They had just been to the Hall, and having extracted everything from unsuspicious Lady Morell as to Egerton's movements, had adjusted their own plans, and were now on their way to meet Captain Egerton, feeling sure they would do so at or about the Fort.

'Pardon my obtuseness in not seeing you till this moment,' said Egerton, raising his hat and shaking hands with the ladies.

'I suppose you have just been doing what we are going to do, saying "Adieu" up there?' said Mrs. Heywood, glancing towards the Fort.

'But Colonel and Miss Ellerslie are out riding,' said Egerton.

'Really!' said Rose. They had seen the riders in the distance, but knowing that Egerton was in this direction had come on. 'Ah well, we need not persevere.'

'I want to speak to Arnot about something of importance,' said Mrs. Heywood; 'but I think, Rose, *you* had better not go further.'

'Well, if I shan't be intruding on Captain Egerton's day-dreams,' said Rose, laughing, 'I will turn.'

What could he say but that he would do his best to keep Miss Heywood out of the ditches and briars into which it seemed he had been unconsciously wandering himself. All the plans of this designing mother and daughter turned out marvellously, and Rose, during their half-hour's walk, contrived to insert into Egerton's mind enough of poisonous doubt to lift him out of bright day-dreams into the most real condition of anxious suspense.

'We leave for London to-morrow morning,' she began; 'mother has at last got her business settled.'

'Really,' falling into the trap, 'so do I.'

'You don't say so! ah, but you won't want to tack on to us. Gentlemen don't like having to look after ladies as a rule,

though I can quite believe *you* are an exception, Captain Egerton.'

Rose can say anything the most deprecatory of herself and her attractions to gentlemen, when alone with them, to win and interest them, while before those of her own sex she treats them most cavalierly.

'Indeed, if I can be of the smallest service to you and Mrs. Heywood, I shall be most glad.'

'Thank you; mother will be very grateful, I am sure. All our heavy boxes are gone. We shan't have much luggage.'

At a turn of the road they came full upon Colonel Ellerslie and Gertrude, and 'the inevitable Jack,' as Rose called him.

'I thought you were to be at home this morning, Miss Ellerslie?' said Egerton.

'So did I,' answered Gertrude eagerly, 'but Papa took a fancy for an early ride, and I just had to go. He wanted to go to Kilbarton to see his lawyer. These lawyers are a nuisance; but,' lowering her voice, 'I have been schooling myself into patience about annoyances; and then, Captain Egerton, then—surely meeting you—instead of—missing you altogether, is a little reward.'

He looked his thanks for her kind, ingenuous words, and answered hurriedly but earnestly,

'And we meet to-night at Miss Maitland's, and I shall get my—hear my—I have writ'—

'Come, Gerty,' said Colonel Ellerslie; 'we shall be late for lunch.'

Gerty wished lunch at the bottom of the sea.

'Good morning, Rose. Good morning, Captain Egerton. Come, Jack!'

'Whatever did Egerton say to you, Gerty?' asked Jack as he helped her to alight; 'you are as white as paper, and you haven't spoken a word since.'

'You are mistaken if you think I shall make *you* my father-

confessor,' said Gertrude haughtily, as she swept into the house.

'I can't go out this evening,' said Colonel Ellerslie to his daughter at luncheon. 'Write an apology to Miss Maitland, Gertrude.'

'Not go!' gasped the girl in dismay; then, recovering herself, for Jack's eyes were upon her, she added, 'You're not ill, are you?'

'Not exactly,' answered the Colonel in a fencing sort of way, 'but I'm not quite the thing. A game at chess will put me to rights.'

'Well, Cousin Helen will be charmed to play with you!' said Gertrude, brightening.

'No, I'm afraid of the night air, I have a twinge of that pain in my left side. I must stay at home to-night. Write and say we can't go.'

'We,' murmured poor Gerty in an agony, under her breath, for well she knew, however unreasonable her father might be in his decisions for her, that fulfilled they would be; but determined to make a final effort on her own behalf, she said,

'Oh well, I can go down later in the evening after our chess —I want so much to go!'

Her father would not meet the wistful look of the blue eyes fixed upon him, but answered,

'No, no, we've had enough of visiting lately. I don't want you to be exposing yourself to these cold, damp nights. Write and say we cannot go.'

Such was the burden of his song, and the reason of it was this. He had, all unknown to Gertrude, been a keen observer of Egerton, and had marked his evident pleasure and interest in her society. The eager little interview, which he had cut short this forenoon, had excited his jealous displeasure, and it was with very ruffled feelings that he found on his library-table, on going in from his ride, the packet which Egerton had left for him. His colour came and went as he read the note addressed to himself, and the look of displeasure in his keen

grey eye, as he took off his spectacles after reading it twice over, told ominously for the writer.

In a few respectful, manly words Egerton laid bare to the father of her to whom his heart clave in strongest, tenderest love his deep devotion and affection, praying him, if he approved of the step, to hand to Miss Ellerslie the letter which he ventured to enclose. He told him particulars enough about his position and family to satisfy the most exacting parent, adding his fervent hope that his suit might be approved of by Colonel Ellerslie, and that he might have his permission to press it with Miss Ellerslie. He was obliged to return to Woolwich, but would hasten back to Lonshire on the earliest possible occasion should Colonel Ellerslie's reply be favourable.

'Favourable!' exclaimed the Colonel in high excitement. 'Does the fellow think that *he* is to frustrate all *my* plans? to swoop down like an eagle and carry my pretty bird away to the east or west, or north or south, as it suits *him*, forsooth? to disappoint Jack, and leave *me alone* to drag out my declining years? Ha!' with an ironical laugh, 'I shall take a spoke out of your rolling wheel, my young man! It's not my own comfort,' he argued with himself, 'that I'm considering—it is *hers*. What a life! to go travelling all over the world, instead of being sheltered here, under her father's care, in a luxurious home. No, no, for *her* sake,'—he repeated the words, as if to still the unwelcome suggestion that would rise up in his mind, that it was the *very* life she would love,—'I put my foot on the whole concern!' He threw the note addressed to Gertrude into the fire, the flames played round it; but before they seized it, his hand snatched it forth, and plunging it into his desk, he muttered, 'You're safer there than in the flames; some fragments might live to tell the tale. *Here* no eye can see you; I would scorn to open or read a line.' And comforting himself with his fine military honour in scorning to read what was meant only for another's eye, he shut and locked his desk, and hastened to join Gertrude and Jack at luncheon.

Gertrude spent the rest of the afternoon in a state of excitement and distress bordering on despair. From the windows she could, through the leafless trees, all but see into Cousin Helen's drawing-room; and as the evening came on, and the lights gleamed, and the guests, she knew, would be arriving, she grew feverish and ill.

'He goes to-morrow morning,' she murmured wildly to herself. 'He has something'—only one thing she felt sure—'to say to me, and here I am, kept at home by—what? one of my father's provoking whims!'

Her heart throbbed and her head ached, and, when summoned to dinner, the colourless cheeks and tightly compressed lips would have startled a mother's heart had she been there to see.

'You have written?' said her father.

No reply.

'You have let Miss Maitland know, Gertrude?'

'What?'

'That we can't go this evening.'

'Please let me go, if for an hour only!'

Gertrude lifted her pale, cold, but beautiful face appealingly to her father.

For a second he did not answer. Just then Jack entered the room; and with more sternness than was his wont with Gertrude, her father said, 'If you have not already written, write instantly, and say we cannot go!'

No other word did Gertrude speak. She felt somehow that the knell of her fate was struck, and, cold and almost unconscious of her surroundings, she suffered herself to be led by Jack to dinner. How much had been crowded into the past few weeks! what she had learned! what new aspirations had been stirred within her! what delicious hopes had sprung up in her heart! and how each and all of these exquisite emotions centred and had their rise in Egerton! True, he had not told her in so many words what she felt sure, in her ingenuous heart, he felt and meant, but he had told her he had much to

say to her on this his last evening here, and the tender pressure of his hand as they parted to-day left no doubt in her mind as to what he meant.

But how misleading this non-appearance of theirs might be! Of what misery might it not be at least the seeds! This was the dark side of the train of thoughts that kept sweeping through her mind this evening as she played chess with her father. Now and then a gleam of light shot through the gloom, as she was comforted by chiding herself for her doubts of Egerton, as if he, in the strength and ardour of his love, would suffer any such mishap to cool that love; would not, at least, make sure it was intentional; would not satisfy himself, not to speak of her, by once more seeing her before he left. And over and above all the misery of this night, she clung to this hope, went to sleep upon it, and rose with it next morning strong and warm in her heart.

Meanwhile the few guests invited by Miss Maitland marvelled over the absence of Colonel Ellerslie and Gertrude.

'I cannot account for it,' said Miss Maitland to Egerton, who, grave and anxious, at last ventured to ask what she thought had detained them.

'Colonel Ellerslie was quite well to-day? he sometimes takes alarms about his health.'

'Oh, perfectly!' said Egerton, whose anxieties centered round his letter.

'Ah! here is a note from Gertrude,' said Miss Maitland, as Gerty's crumpled little envelope was handed to her.

'*Hélas!* Colonel Ellerslie is ailing,' reading aloud to Captain Egerton.

'But *Miss Ellerslie?*' he said eagerly; 'surely an ailment of the Colonel's need not prevent *her* coming?'

He waited almost breathlessly for Miss Maitland to speak.

'No, she is not coming,' she said gravely. 'Her father needs her.'

'Where is Jack?' said Hilda Morell, bustling forward, while Fitz followed meekly.

'At the Fort,' said Rose Heywood.

'Where else should he be, or would he be?' exclaimed Fitz.

Rose watched Egerton's face; a twitch of pain passed over it as he moved to a side-table and lifted a book.

'Of course,' said Rose in soft tones to her mother, but intended for Egerton to hear, 'it is but natural they should not care to come this evening, when they have been arranging the marriage-contract to-day! They must have a great deal to talk about by themselves.'

Every syllable reached Egerton's ears, and hastily laying down the book he turned away towards the window, and gazed out into the clear, star-lit sky. Presently he rejoined the party, and entered into conversation with Miss Maitland.

All Rose's attacks missed fire to-night, Egerton was impervious; and even a song of Gertrude's which he specially liked, and which, in the hope of pleasing him, Rose had learned, was listened to by him as though he heard it not. And when, roused by her inquiry as to how he liked *her* rendering of it, he stammered out, as an apology for inability to criticize it, his ignorance of it, she got a deep insight into the true state of his feelings towards Gertrude; and every bad passion in her heart was roused to frustrate the happiness of those devoted hearts, and to win for herself the coveted prize of Egerton's hand, with or without his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

'*To die* for what we love! Oh! there is power
In the true heart, and pride, and joy for this.
It is *to live* without the vanished light
That strength is needed.'

TEN days after the events recorded in our last chapter, Gertrude stood beside Miss Maitland in her boudoir. Her kind friend was shocked with the girl's looks. The colour had faded from her cheeks, and such a look of sadness was over her, that Miss Maitland, drawing her to her kind arms, folded the motherless girl in a strong, tender embrace. And on her true, loving breast, Gertrude's frozen tears flowed out in a blessed shower.

'I am broken-hearted, Cousin Helen,' she said at last, glancing up through her tears into the kind face bent so lovingly over her. 'And I have come to tell you all, if you have time,' she added hesitatingly, and glancing at Miss Maitland's davenport with its letters and papers.

'I am perfectly free,' said Miss Maitland very warmly. 'I have got to-day's letters answered, and am so glad to have you, Gerty. I have not had one good talk with you since my return home.'

'No, indeed, there has been so much going on; but now it is all over!' in the tone of one whose last hour had come, and who was just going to be executed. 'What a time it has been, Cousin Helen! I have been more wretched, and more happy, this past fortnight, than ever in all my life before!'

'You do not look very happy to-day,' said Miss Maitland, stroking the soft hair.

'No, no, I'm back to the misery; rather there is far more misery now than then. You know about Papa refusing to let me go abroad. I wrote you all about *that*. Well, Cousin Helen, I want to ask you, who are so fair in your judgments, and so wise and good, *why* do you think Papa will not let me go away anywhere from home? I don't choose to speak to Rose or anybody about all the feelings that rise up in my heart about him. But I may, I can, speak to you about everything; what can it be?'

'I can tell you.'

Gertrude settled herself on a stool at Miss Maitland's feet, and looked up eagerly to hear her speak.

'Your mother,' said Miss Maitland, 'your dear mother—my best earthly friend—died, as you know, when your father was from home, and never since has he, as you also know, slept a night out of his own house. The same morbid, timid feeling has seized him about you, and he cannot tolerate the thought of you being a day away from him.'

'That is why he never sent me to school, like other girls, but kept me cooped up under Miss Pryde's enfolding wings?'

'Yes, Gerty,' said Miss Maitland gently; 'but if you chafe under the restraint, you see there is love through it all. If he did not love you, he would not be so overweening in his anxiety about you.'

'It's not a manly love, though, Cousin Helen!' said Gerty, her eyes flashing, as she added, 'not the way Captain Egerton would act. I know you will say I *ought* meekly to submit to all his tiresome whims about me; but my own power to judge about things *will* rise up, and I *cannot* see either the love or justice of his treatment of me. But about mother'—in a softened tone.

'They were so devoted to each other, Gerty! What he has suffered from losing her, and does suffer, and will to the end,

touches my heart deeply. *You* have much in your power to soften and sweeten his lot. And, Gertrude, you have tasted of the love, have you not, that constraineth to live, not for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and who died for us?' She bent her face over Gertrude as she spoke.

'I thought I had, Cousin Helen,' said Gertrude ingenuously, 'but, somehow, since—since—Captain Egerton, who taught me about it, has gone away, I feel as if it must have been not so real as I thought. I believed I loved Christ, and felt so happy in it; and when he spoke of His hand in all creation, and in everything that is beautiful, I loved Him too. But now—but now—when he is gone, and I am so lonely and miserable, I don't seem to have anything to fall back upon; the change doesn't seem to have been real. You know what I mean?' looking eagerly up to Miss Maitland.

'Perfectly.'

'And everything seems so strange; for, Cousin Helen, you know I am not vain, but he *did* seem to care for me, and he is—I never cared for any one before, and'—under her breath—'never shall.'

'But has he not—? What has happened, dear?'

'Just that he has gone away.'

'But he told you of his—?'

'No, no, he didn't,—he all *but*, once or twice, and would have told me all here that night, but then, you know, Papa wouldn't come.'

Miss Maitland looked grave, and sat silently absorbed over Gertrude's words.

'Cousin Helen,' said Gertrude, breaking in upon the silence, 'were *you* ever in love?'

She repented instantly of her question, as something like a great spasm of pain passed over the pure, soft face before her, and the colour came and went violently.

'Cousin Helen, have I hurt you?' said the girl, clasping the small hands eagerly within her own. 'Do not mind my reckless words. I never meant to vex you so.'

But in another moment Miss Maitland had recovered her composure, and answered quietly,

'I should not be so easily hurt. Yes, Gertrude, I *have* loved. It's an old story, and I never thought to go over it again, but it may help and strengthen *you* to hear of it. A more idolatrous heart,' she went on, 'never, perhaps, beat than mine. Rudolph Græme lived next place to ours, in Northshire. Our parents were related, and we grew up together, scarcely remembering the time when we had not known and loved each other. His father died, and his elder brother succeeded to the place. Rudolph was clever, but lacked perseverance; he would settle to no study to fit him for any profession; and, being his mother's favourite child, she secretly supplied him with money, and during his father's lifetime he lived in luxury, and with no care for the morrow. I was too thoughtless of life and its responsibilities, and too happy in his society, to burden myself with anxiety for the future. But the death of his father brought many changes; and after several fruitless endeavours to get anything to do at home, Rudolph made up his mind to go to New Zealand, a colony then opening up with many allurements to young men. My parents resisted his wish that we should be married, and then emigrate. They said as soon as he had made a home for himself and me, they would let me join him, but meanwhile he must go alone. A sad, desolating time it was for me, but we could not help ourselves. He succeeded in a fashion, wrote kind letters, if spasmodically, and my heart kept strong and glad.

'Things, of course, changed at home. My sisters married, and went to their new homes; my father died, in a good old age, and I was left to nurse my gentle mother in her broken health and declining years. My great hope, which grew and strengthened as time went on, was that Rudolph, who had by his own account got on exceptionally well, would come home; that, somehow, circumstances would right themselves, and that we should be married.'

'Well, Cousin Helen?' in almost breathless interest.

'One day a letter came. It was shorter than usual, but it asked me to go out to him at once. I noticed nothing in the letter then savouring of coldness or change; but mother was ill, and altogether dependent on me for care and love. I could not leave her; and I wrote to Rudolph, telling him of her state, and of my inability to leave her in her present condition. There was plenty of hope in my letter about us both, and of joyful anticipation for our future. A long interval elapsed. What shall I say of the dreariness of those days and weeks? My brother was dead, and his son, a child, inherited, of course, our old home. His mother—an imperious and selfish woman—did not trouble herself with our affairs, which, by the absconding of our man of business, were in an almost ruined state. We were reduced from luxury to poverty—at least, to the kindness of relatives for our support. Rudolph knew all, and he was the star in that darksome night. One morning—how I recall each circumstance of that day! —one morning a letter came. My mother was a little better. It was summer, and the window of her room in our cottage was open; the scent of the sweet-peas and mignonette in our little plot was wafted in; the hum of the bees, and the song of the birds was our music; I opened my still young heart to the sweet influences in God's beautiful world, and to the glad hope that mother was going to be well, and all was to be happy and bright again.

'The letter—his letter—mine! it seemed the crowning blessing of that blissful morning as it was put into my hand. I opened it; it looked short, but how greedily I devoured it! Oh, how much misery may be distilled unto a few drops!

'He had received my last, he wrote, and my refusal to go to him had cancelled our engagement. He thought a woman—like a man—was to leave father and mother for her husband; he had been mistaken in me. No doubt I had wearied of my engagement; he now set me free.'

Gertrude buried her face in Miss Maitland's lap, and neither spoke.

'I never expected to have gone over all this with any one on earth!' said Miss Maitland at last, 'nor would I but for the hope that it may help you.'

Gertrude raised her flushed, tearful face with a look of gratitude, and pressed the hands she held within her own.

'How I got through with everything that had to be done I cannot recall,' continued Miss Maitland. 'It seems a dull blank. But I know that I got through it, and no one but my mother knew that I had suffered.'

'But did he—this Rudolph, not write again? What became of him?'

'When I was able, I wrote to him. I felt it was due to myself to tell him how mistaken he was, how unchanged my feelings were towards him, and yet how impossible it was for me to leave my mother alone—and ill. While my letter was on its way, tidings reached me of his marriage!'

'Cold, cruel wretch!' exclaimed Gertrude, with flashing eyes. 'What a pity your letter went!'

'So I, at first, thought,' said Miss Maitland quietly; 'but I felt it was right. It showed him the unchanged state of my heart towards him.'

'Cousin Helen! what happened? did she die?'

'No, but'—while a quiver shot through her slender frame—'he died.'

Gertrude looked up, perplexed and astonished. 'What could it signify what happened next, if he died and all hopes of re-union were at an end!'

'Put yourself in his place, as I tried to do, and here was his situation. He had been reared in luxury, and to do nothing. He had no application, and of course did not really succeed out there any more than he did at home. We were poor and separated, and if absence does *not* make the heart grow fonder, it cools and often alienates it.'

'If it does not—oh! Cousin Helen!'

'I said *if*, darling! Then Adèle crossed his path, a winsome if self-willed girl, with nuggets of gold. She fell in love with him; others were at her feet. You can fill up my sketch, Gerty. They were married.'

'And I hope did *not* live happily all their days?' interrupted Gertrude impatiently.

'Ah no! their life was wretched. I heard it all related by friends who came home, and knew nothing of my interest in Rudolph. She held him in her golden fetters, and his proud spirit chafed under a thraldom out of which he could not get. Her restlessness and passion for gambling led them hither and thither, until at last it brought them home—not to his old home,—that, like mine, was broken up,—but to London, where they came for medical skill for his shattered health, and for safety from temptation to her besetting sin.'

'And you, Cousin Helen?' asked Gerty, whose pity for the false Rudolph was not to be kindled even by the recital of his blighted hopes and ruined health. 'What kept happening to you all this dreadful time?'

'A wealthy cousin of my mother, an eccentric old bachelor in London, who it seems had watched our career, but who had never by sign or deed let us know that he had, died and left the bulk of his fortune to mother and me. None of my sisters —no member of our family besides ourselves—was named in his settlement, and mother and I, to our extreme surprise, found ourselves lifted out of our obscure poverty into affluence and position.'

'If only it had come in time,' groaned Gerty; 'and yet, this Rudolph didn't deserve it—didn't deserve *you*, at any rate, Cousin Helen!'

'I thought just as you did at first, that it had all come too late,' said Miss Maitland with a faint smile, 'and wondered how things seemed so often just to miss falling in to make people happy—a hair's-breadth opening up often a chasm of separation. But I learnt to judge differently.'

'And did you leave the little cottage and come here?'

'No; the doctor wished my mother to have further advice, and we went to London, taking up our abode in the charmingly appointed town-house of our kind old uncle.'

'Oh! I am so glad to think of you there,' said Gerty, squeezing Miss Maitland's hand.

'How mother enjoyed our drives, and the parks and the flowers! and we had many friends coming and going, and she had a time of partially restored health and happiness.'

'And *you*, Cousin Helen?'

'I found rest for my poor weary heart, Gertrude, and look back upon this time as the best and most memorable of all my life. Under the faithful preaching of our clergyman there I was brought to believe, and know that man's chief end is not to secure the greatest amount possible of happiness here, but to know and glorify *God* here, and to enjoy Him hereafter!'

'And *did* that satisfy you—fill up the dreadful blank—and fit you to live your beautiful life, dear Cousin Helen?' said the girl enthusiastically.

'O Gertrude—yes—He satisfied, and satisfies daily, my longing soul; and He will yours, if only you will let Him.'

'And did it all come quickly, Cousin Helen?'

'Yes—and no—must be my answer. I seemed to feel that Christ could satisfy my craving heart, but I had to be taught my sinfulness, my need of Him as my Saviour, step by step.'

'Some day you will tell me more about it,' said Gertrude, noticing the look of exhaustion on Miss Maitland's face.

'Oh yes! many talks we shall have, I hope. Meanwhile, Gerty,—trust my word,—that whatever—yes, *whatever* brings us to a true knowledge of ourselves and to the feet of Jesus, is the greatest blessing that could come to us, and is from the hand of that divine Friend who loves us better, infinitely better, than the dearest of earthly friends:

'"Earthly friends may faint and fail us,
One day love, the next day leave us.
But this Friend will ne'er forsake us!
Oh, how He loves!"'

'Did you never hear from Rudolph again?' asked Gerty under her breath.

'I saw him frequently.'

'Saw him?'

'Yes, saw him; we met in London,' answered Miss Maitland quietly. 'I was stepping out of the carriage one day, to go into a shop in Oxford Street, when my attention was drawn to a delicate-looking man leaning heavily on a little girl's arm. We almost knocked against each other, and I at once recognised the Rudolph of my early days in the broken-down, dying-looking man before me.'

'And what did you do?' asked Gerty.

'I stopped, and held out my hand. He gazed at me. Of course, I was changed too, but immediately he recognised me. "Helen," was all he said; and I really feared he would have fallen on the street. I begged him to get into the carriage, into which he was helped, and little Helène took her place beside him. We hardly exchanged a word during our long drive to one of the East-End suburbs, where they were in shabby apartments. Hesitatingly he asked me in, and his whole domestic miseries stood revealed before me. His wife looked—ah! well, I shall not speak of how she looked, but her inveterate love of gambling and her sadly intemperate habits had dragged them down to this. From one continental gaming town and table after another he had snatched her, and now, in search of health and of restoration to some sort of social comfort, they had taken refuge in the great city.'

'*What* was she like, dear Cousin Helen? Tell me, *please.*'

'She had lost all trace of beauty when I saw her, but the look of misery and of despair touched my heart.'

'O Cousin Helen! your worst enemy!'

'Oh no! she knew nothing of me, or of our past, and the wreck of everything about her was pitiable to see.'

'But *she* brought it all on.'

'So she did; but it was such misery!'

'And did you actually go often to see them, and let them come to you?'

'I did not go often,' answered Miss Maitland; 'I *could* not,' with deep meaning in her words. 'But she and the children came constantly to us.'

'And Rudolph?'

'Ah, Gertrude! he was brought home from New Zealand to get eternal life in London. Our pastor visited him—drew out his confidence—led him to the discovery of his state in God's sight, and to the knowledge of God's love in Christ. And he lived long enough to testify to the reality of the great and blessed change.'

'And did he ever speak to you—beg your pardon—explain?'

'We never had *any* talks alone—it was better not. But before he died, and in presence of his wife, he thanked me, told me of his faith and hope, and commended his family to my care.'

'What a handful! I hope you did not see it to be your duty to accept such a strange and most unnatural charge!'

'We took them home at once!'

'Adèle!'

'Yes, you know her; but indeed you would scarcely recognise in the lady-like little woman—my cousin so-called—the once self-willed and flighty Adèle.'

'Where have I seen her, Cousin Helen? She's no relation of Mrs. Adèle here?'

'She is—herself.'

Gertrude was as if struck dumb. All her life she—and for that part every one else in Lonshire, as she believed—had looked upon Mrs. Græme and her family as the real cousins of Miss Maitland; and the revulsion of feeling from indignation at the treatment Cousin Helen had received, and the noble generosity of her conduct towards the wife and family of the man who had played her false, rose to a high pitch of enthusiasm. 'I always thought they—some of them at least—had done you a good turn once, Cousin Helen,' exclaimed Gerty, when at last

speech returned. 'They don't go on like people that owe *everything* to you.'

'She was very young when she was left a widow, and had been so spoiled and indulged all her life, that at first she took things pretty much as a matter of course; but she is *so* improved.'

'But what would she ever have been without you, Cousin Helen? Does she think as she should of that side of the question?'

'If only you had known her as she was, Gerty,' answered Miss Maitland, 'you would see the remarkable improvement in her whole character and ways. She is of French extraction, and was frivolous to a degree, caring for nothing but dress and admiration and excitement. Now she can live with only occasional changes in our quiet country style, and strives hard to set a good example before her daughters.'

'To think that the obligation is all on their side!' said Gerty hastily, recalling the impatient way in which Helène and Clotilde had often spoken of their secluded country life at St. Helen's.

'Not so, Gerty,' said Miss Maitland earnestly. 'The bitterness of these early days of my life, the crushing disappointment of my young and ardent hopes, were the means God took to lead me to Himself as the sure portion of my life. Enthusiastic, sanguine, strong—even amid the reverses of our fortune—in Rudolph's love, and in the utter devotion of my heart to him, I found myself, when he failed me, stranded, wrecked. Looking back on that time, I see that there was no room in my heart for God, for Christ. No, there was not; and God in His mercy made room for Himself.'

'O Cousin Helen!'

'Thus Rudolph—yes, Rudolph—was the means of my conversion; of my poor, bleeding, hungering, craving heart being at last filled with the love of Him who alone can satisfy the longing soul. To bring one and all of his family to share in the salvation and love, which, thank God, he at last knew and possessed, has been the one great object of my life.'

'What a life's work!' said Gerty, who felt herself as far away from the mere conception of it as one pole is from the other.

'I feel it was God's work for me,' said Miss Maitland; '*that* has nerved me, nothing short of that could.'

'Did you never repent of it—wish you could shove it all off you, and live alone in peace, or with friends more congenial to you?'

'I have had every imaginable thought and temptation, Gerty, but *that* has driven me to my knees, and the answers and help I have got have strengthened me in my work.'

'For instance—do tell me how, Cousin Helen?'

Miss Maitland paused as if to gather out of the crowd of recollections some one to put before her eager young friend.

'Once,' at last she said, 'when the extreme petulance of Adèle and her want of taste, to put it mildly, in grumbling over the monotony of our London life were vexing me greatly,—all the more, that from my mother's increased age and delicacy I had to keep from her all such irritations,—I was very sad, and the temptation to throw off the burden pressed upon me. I was so depressed that, on the Sunday following, I felt as if I could not go to church; a wave of temptation seemed submerging me, and the inclination to stay at home and rest both mind and body almost prevailed to keep me back. A friend, however, called to accompany me, and rousing myself, I went. Our pastor's text was, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" O Gerty, it was a word in season for me. He noted the cry in Christ's heart for human sympathy in His hour of agony, and that went home to me first; next, His disappointment at not getting it. And then he added,—I remember his very words, they are burned in upon my heart,—"It *is* possible to fling off burdens from our shoulders, God-imposed burdens—yes, it is; we may refuse to bear them, and virtually say to God, I will not endure this any longer, and God may let us take our own determined way. We may fling them off, but presently Christ will come and say, 'Sleep on now and take your rest. The time was when you might have watched with me,

might have borne this burden for me, might have been a fellow-worker with me; but you would not. You had your opportunity of showing your love for me by bearing this trial, conquering sloth, or exercising self-denial; that time is gone. I do not need you now! Sleep on now, and take your rest.'"'

Miss Maitland paused, then went on, while Gertrude drank in the passionate words which followed.

'I felt as if I had nearly lost *my* opportunity; I could hardly, as I listened, from my oppressed heart breathe the prayer which, nevertheless, rose up:

'O my Lord! I thank Thee for this help. I thank Thee that Thou hast yet left me my opportunity to watch with Thee, to work for Thee. My feet had well-nigh slipt from Thy paths, Thy right hand has upheld me.'

A long pause ensued.

At last Miss Maitland said softly, 'So now, Gertrude, I have made you my *confidante*—my first, and last.'

CHAPTER X.

'Before the curing of a strong disease,
Even in the instant of repair and health,
The fit is strongest; evils that take leave
On their departure most of all show evil.'

'The grace of heaven
Before, behind thee, and on every hand
Envolve thee round.'

AS Gertrude walked home this afternoon, her mind reviewed more calmly the picture of 'Cousin Helen's strange but splendid life,' as she found herself calling it. The excitement of listening to such an unexpected romance, in the history, too, of one whom all her life she had known and looked upon as one singularly sheltered and unruffled by any of the heart's stormy passions, gave place to the most enthusiastic admiration for her beloved friend, who had acted so nobly and disinterestedly in such trying circumstances. 'I could have imagined her doing good and self-denying work,' she found herself saying, 'if—if—yes, if Rudolph had been alive, and true to her. But what a life, after the blight, the cruel blight, which would have withered my heart, I know, and have shrivelled me up into a sour, selfish old maid.' A look of bitterness came over Gertrude's face. She was tasting of that strange solitude of heart which sets in after the affections have been stirred and warmed by the dearest human love, and have suddenly been cast out of the sweet resting-place they had found into the cold dreariness of forsakenness. Like the ivy which finds its freshness, its

life, from the strong oak round which it clings, climbing ever upwards, heavenwards, but which, when wrenched and torn from the heart of oak, lies withering amid the damp earth and weeds below, so poor Gertrude found her heart, in this blank and dreary time, not anchored, as she had hoped it was, on the Rock of Ages, but stranded amid the shifting shoals of disappointment and surprise.

'I loved, or thought I loved and trusted Christ,' she soliloquized, 'when *he* spoke of Him, when *together* we had sweet converse on these great subjects. And I did, I do, love Him in His beautiful works of creation; in thee, O sun! in you, O clouds!' glancing upwards, while tears filled her eyes. 'But now all is changed without him; the very sun seems dim, and the earth full of shadows. What Egerton has, what Cousin Helen has had through all these years of disappointment and loneliness, *I know nothing of.* But, O Christ! give me to know it; give me to know Thee, as Thou art to them, my *satisfying portion!*'

Such a prayer was never uttered in vain. A foretaste of blessing seemed breathed into Gertrude's heart. She even then experienced something of the promise, 'Let the heart of every one rejoice that seeks the Lord.' It is good to know where exactly we stand in the divine life; better still, if we are not yet in it at all, to know and believe that, and to set out instantly upon it; best when the soul has actually found and taken its resting-place at the cross of Christ.

Afterwards, when Gertrude came calmly to look back on this crisis in her life, she saw all the love and wisdom which had guided her; saw how, had she thus got the desire of her heart in the fulfilment of its dearest earthly affections, 'the root of the matter' might have been wanting in her spiritual life, and instead of becoming a living branch of the living Vine, she might have been like a flower in a child's garden, stuck in, fair and sweet for an hour, but laid low to fade and perish with the first storm or pelting shower.

'Herod heard the word gladly.' 'He that received the

seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.'

When Gertrude reached hòme, she heard that her father had gone out riding. He had asked for her, and she could gather from Simmonds' look that he had grumbled a good deal over her long absence. She felt thankful to be alone.

'This is for you, Miss,' said the old butler, handing a parcel to Gertrude.

She seized it from him, and glancing at the hand-writing, hastened to her room. With eager fingers she undid the parcel. It contained a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. There was no word of writing on the fly-leaf; but a little ribbon-mark at a certain page drew her attention to the page, and she read greedily these words:

'Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death."'

Gertrude had read *The Pilgrim's Progress* long, long ago at her mother's knee, and that dear parent had dropped many a lesson into the little head.

She had done her part with her child, storing the young mind with divine truth. She had filled the water-pots with water, trusting to God's faithful Spirit to turn that water into wine. If all parents would do likewise, they would, sooner or

later, find that God will fulfil His part. And now, as Gertrude read from the wonderful book,—for, next to the Bible, what book *is* so wonderful?—many of the lessons taught her in these far-back days revived, and stood forth before her mind's eye. She became absorbed in her book. Instead of going forward in the allegory, she went back from the Cross to get, as she called it, 'the pilgrim's start.' What was it that first made him set forth? What was the burden that weighed him so grievously down? And what allured him to the Christian's life? To her surprise, she found that no such discontent, no such unsatisfied longings as abounded in her heart and life, had been the moving spring in his pilgrimage. On the contrary, he had the tenderest social ties binding him to the world, and to his home, but something stronger still had drawn him forth from these, and impelled him to a pilgrim's life. With the keenest interest Gertrude read and scanned his motives—read, not for the classic beauty of the style or the interest of the story, but as having now herself a stake in the great concern.

His burden was the burden of sin. Ah! she knew little of that; but before she finished her reading to-day, some sort of conviction was forced home upon her that she was a sinner, and needed the same deliverance that Christian got.

Then her little marker—*his* marker—pointed her to the cross of Christ, and the words, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death,' struck her heart. Something of the nature of His great substitution became visible to her mind's eye, while His personality in human nature, suffering and dying to make salvation for such as her possible, touched the deep currents of feeling within her.

An affectionate nature is fine soil for the grace of God to work in!

After a long, quiet 'poring' over her book, Gertrude laid it reverently down, and thought over all she had heard and read. Of one thing she became assured, that her past life, especially its later years, had been a train of selfishness and grumbling;

also that the better feelings she had lately had towards God were mixed and unreal, and that as regarded her relations with Him, she was altogether in a dangerously wrong condition.

Perplexed and surprised at the retrospect of her life, and with a great cry in her heart for God—how she longed for *his* sympathy and guidance, who had first made her think!

But he was not there. She was alone. Alone! Ah no! Something within her told her she was not, and falling on her knees, she poured out her heart before the Lord, and found in Him a refuge.

We often speak of God's providences as 'mysteries,' and so they doubtless frequently are. But a close observer will discover the most evident connection between these and the circumstances and temperament of the one 'mysteriously' dealt with. Christ's object is to save the soul, to bring the sin-sick soul to Himself, the Great Physician.

An analysis of the way in which an earthly physician treats his patient may lift us to the contemplation of the higher spiritual case. The disease, let us suppose, has concentrated itself in the limb, and some such dialogue as this takes place: 'I have exhausted,' says the doctor to his patient,—'I have exhausted my skill to relieve you, but the complaint which has insidiously spread, has now concentrated itself in your right arm; amputation of *that* may save your life.'

'Alas! is this all you have to tell me after the suffering of these long days and nights?'

'All.'

'I almost wish you had not told me this!'

'Then you *must* have died.'

'But I *may die* from the effects of the amputation?'

'You may.'

The patient relapses into a long muse over his condition, and when the doctor returns, he says eagerly, 'Doctor, life is sweet; I had rather want my arm and live.'

'Remember, you *may* die.'

'So you told me; but as I am, I *must?*'

'Certainly.'

'I will risk it.'

And for hope of the life that now is, the stricken man undergoes the pain and loss of his limb.

Christ, the Physician of souls, watches over and notes the insidious spread of besetting sin in the heart, be it in the heart of a sinner on its way to Him, or of one already in His keeping. He sits as a refiner; the fine gold must be purged of its dross, must be put into the fire. Unlike the earthly physician, He knows that He can have no consultation with His patient, because he will choose death rather than part with his idol of gold or clay.

Frequently the stricken one and those about him call his trials 'mysterious;' cannot see the point or issue of them. But now and then the poor bleeding heart is conscious of the discipline being the very kind it needed, and bows meekly to the rod.

I have known young wives tremble at their very happiness; have seen their lips quiver as they drank from their cup of bliss, lest, while they drank, they should forget God, and lose, in the greatness of the gift, the heavenly Giver Himself; and now and then, as, yielding to the fascination of their lot, they have sat under the boughs of the sheltering roof-tree plucking the pleasant fruit, and losing themselves in the delights of their happy home-life, they have been startled by the gleam of the shining axe which even then was being laid to the root of their Eden-tree of bliss. And when the blow fell which laid them low, quenching the light of their eyes, sending them on their way bruised and crushed, they could look up through their tears and say, 'It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.'

CHAPTER XI.

'Life does not make us; we make life.'

'HAVE you called on the new people at Garnlee?' asked Lady Morell of Gertrude one morning.

'No; indeed I forgot all about them,' said Gertrude, smiling. 'It is a bit of a trial, besides, to go there now Rose is gone.'

'Ah yes! have you heard from Rose?'

'Oh yes!'

'Where are they?'

'Still in Paris; but I think they will be moving on soon now. They are *en route* not for Germany, but for Zurich.'

'What takes them there at this season? why don't they go to Rome, or some nice sort of place, during the winter? Switzerland is all very well in the summer.'

'They can't, Aunt Julia. They haven't money; they have to go to places that are cheap, whether they're nice or not. Rose feels it dreadfully. I'm so sorry for her; but she says, by hook or by crook, she'll be back to Paris in May. Perhaps they'll just stay on. She says it's nicer than ever it was, that they have some charming friends, and are seeing a great deal.'

'It's a pity for them being so poor,' said Lady Morell absently. She had never known anything but luxury, and could not grasp the notion even of money straits. 'But about these Murrie people; they are the funniest set. We went to call,—I went, I should more properly say, for the girls never make these sort of visits, you know; but they were all out, so I

got our pack of cards left. But there's surely a screw loose somewhere! Major Murrie is a most fascinating man, quite a man of the world. He was in the Indian army, you know, but is retired. The girl is sweet-looking, but with a terribly depressed air. She had such a scared appearance the day they returned our visit. When Jack asked the Major to go to the billiard-room, and ordered in brandy and soda, she turned as white as a sheet, and seemed on the point of asking them not to go. Evidently, however, she did not dare. I knew Mrs. Murrie before she was married. She was a Miss Welsby, of a good English family, and poor young Murrie had a handsome patrimony; but the peep I got of the *menage* the day I called made me wonder what sort of people they were. A girl, a mere girl, bare-headed and with her sleeves tucked up, came to the door after Barton had knocked and better knocked, and in answer to his inquiries about her mistress, could get nothing but, "Not at home, sir."'

'Well, what more did he want?' asked Gertrude merrily, always a little tempted to be impatient over Lady Morell's very minute descriptions of things.

'Well, of course, my dear—but it was said in a queer way, you know; she *must* have been the kitchen maid.'

'A case of when the cat's out the mice will play. Miss Murrie is very clever, is she not? What age is she?'

'She might be any age, she has such an anxious, fatigued look about her. But how she drew to me the day she was here when I told her I had known her mother! Two tears stood in her large eyes,—they're just the colour of my grey stockings,—but she kept them back. I quite drew to the poor thing. There is something about a motherless child that draws one, and when I said I hoped she would come and see me soon again, she clasped her small hands and said, "Oh, if I might! Carruthers can spare me sometimes. 'Tis lovely here," and she gazed round the room and at the conservatory, and then back to me, with a strange, dreamy look; it made me positively creep!

I mean to ask them to the ball here on the night of the weddings.'

'Aunt Julia, that's just what I came to say—to ask you to excuse me coming,' at last Gertrude got out.

'To the weddings, child? What *do* you mean? why, I'd never get on without you. Gerty, what's the matter?'

'I can tell *you*, Aunt Julia; I'm coming to the weddings, oh yes! but'—

'You'll be my daughter, Gerty, when—wh—en they're away,' in a tone rather of relief and expectation than of regret at the prospect. 'Oh that you would be my real daughter!' she added in a low, nervous tone.

'But, Aunt Julia,' interrupted Gertrude, 'I'm not coming to the dance in the evening; I cannot.'

'Where are you going?'

'Nowhere.'

'Then you *must* come. What does all this mean? Jack will be very—very—angry. It will spoil the whole thing, Gerty.'

'Jack will have plenty of other partners, Aunt Julia; but whether or not,' in a tone of gathering strength, '*I'm* not coming.'

'Well, then, I shall either give up the whole concern, Gerty, —the dance, I mean,—or go to bed!'

'I am sure you will be ready to go to your room, dear Auntie,' said Gerty affectionately; 'what a day it will be for you!'

'Yes; and the girls leave everything for me and their maids to do; except their riding-habits, they don't seem to care whether their dresses fit or not. But are the wedding-dresses not queer, Gerty? Upon my word, they're the funniest brides! What sort of wives they will make I don't know. And neither Fitz nor Sam have large incomes. I'm just terrified the girls will ruin them, their tastes are so expensive; and they've never been accustomed to take care of money or look after the house, or do anything but ride and hunt.'

'Well, but Fitz and Sam know all that,' interrupted

Gerty; 'they've stayed here often enough to see exactly what they are.'

'So they have; but, my dear, when poverty comes in at the door, love often flies out at the window!'

'Poverty! Aunt Julia?'

'Well, Fitz is a younger son of a very extravagant Irish family; his father helps him. And Hilda will have something; but if she tires of the regiment, and they leave it, they'll have enough to do. Sam, again, though Belcom Park is his own, and his position is all we could desire, is burdened with annuitants on the property, and is by no means so wealthy as people think. But I'm thankful he lives in Bedfordshire, and not in Ireland.'

'Well, at any rate they're getting the husbands they love,' said Gertrude.

'Well—yes—as much as they're likely to, at least; but it's not the kind of love that would have pleased *me*, Gerty,' said Lady Morell, who was of a sentimental and, it must be confessed, an affectionate nature.

'But *they* are pleased,' said Gertrude, who dreaded Lady Morell's backward flights into the days of her courtship.

'I hope so; and to think that to-morrow month is the wedding day! If only they would have worn white dresses and veils,' keeping Gertrude, who rose to go.

'Take care of yourself, Aunt Julia,' said Gerty kindly.

'Yes, yes; if only you will come over often and help me, I'll get on nicely.'

'That I will,' said the girl heartily. 'Aunt Dorothy comes to-morrow, and she will go out with Papa, so he won't want me so much.'

'Aunt Dorothy! Oh! I forgot she was coming. What a nuisance for you! She is so pernicketty and prim, so sharp-tempered too.'

Gertrude did not speak.

'You never *do* get on, you two, but I suppose she has to be asked now and then.'

'She lives all alone, Aunt Julia, and she is very, very fond of Papa.'

'So she is. Well, I wish you joy of her, my dear; but be sure and come across here as often as you can. I can't get on without you!'

CHAPTER XII.

'Why should we dream youth's draught of joy
If pure would sparkle less;
Or that the cup would sooner clog
The Saviour deigned to bless?'

'I DON'T know what we are all coming to,' said Hilda Morell one evening a few nights later, as the little family party, free for once of visitors, chatted round the drawing-room fire.

'Your dance is up, Jack, I hear,' addressing that luminary, who was cutting up the pages of a new *Punch*.

'*My* dance!'

'Certainly; you didn't expect *us* to worry ourselves about such frivolities, especially when we're not to take part?'

'Assuredly not,' with a sneer.

'You'll have to start on a new tack, Jack,' said Adelaide, sinking into a low seat near her brother, and pretending to quiet the yelping of Corso and Dash.

Jack did not seem to hear.

'Yes, you needn't go in for lectures any more, or science, but strike up a prayer meeting, or take a class in the Sunday-school.'

Jack scowled.

'What are you saying, my dear?' said Lady Morell, letting down a few stitches of her knitting in her eagerness.

'I was remarking,' said Adelaide, 'that to find favour in certain quarters now, Jack will have to go in for the pious dodge.'

'Be quiet, will you!' muttered Jack.

'Me or Dash?' mischievously.

'What is it all about?' asked Lady Morell, one of the trials of whose life it is, that, being a little deaf, and always wanting to know what everybody is saying, she is in a chronic state of fidget to catch up every one's meaning at such little domestic gatherings as the present. 'What is it, my dear?'

'Yes; what is it, indeed?' said Hilda. 'Gerty has taken a class in the Sunday-school.'

Lady Morell's knitting fell out of her hands, and Jack angrily flung down his *Punch*, while Corso and Dash, urged on by Adelaide, set up a furious barking.

'The Sunday-school!' gasped Lady Morell.

'The Sunday-school, *mater*,' shouted Adelaide, putting her lips to a new horn she wished to 'try.'

'Miss Maitland's doing, of course,' said Hilda.

'She'll be catching small-pox and all sorts of horrors from the low children,' said Lady Morell in a tone of dismay. 'I remember taking a great fancy to the gamekeeper's children, wanting to have them to tea in the drawing-room sometimes; but your father—ah! how things come back to me!—wouldn't hear of it; he was so afraid of me risking myself, and'—

'And you never have risked yourself, and never will, *mater* mine,' interrupted Hilda, 'to your dying day.'

'There's no harm surely in going to—to teach in a Sunday-school,' said Jack, stooping to pick up his *Punch*. 'I shouldn't mind'—

'Going yourself some day to teach,' interrupted Hilda. 'Ada, mark my words—after we've cleared out, everything will be turned topsy-turvy. The whole family will flock meekly after Gerty and her daft on-goings. What rubbish to go on like that!'

'We shan't know the place,' replied Adelaide. 'Methodists at Garnlee, instead of the widow and the bewitching Rose! Everybody teaching in Sunday-schools, Jack and Bruce presiding at prayer meetings! I think we've hit the right time for our escape! I never before felt so thankful I was going to be married! We shall hardly manage to get Sam and Fitz to come with us on a short visit even.'

'Oh, they'll all tire of it,' said Hilda; 'by the time we pay our first visit home, they'll all be at their old games. You never see the religious fit last long—never. Show me one case,' appealing all round.

'Of what?' asked Bruce.

'Of any one that changes from a rational, gay sort of life to a melancholy religious one sticking to it.'

'Miss Maitland,' said Lady Morell, 'was once the gayest of the gay.'

'Oh, but *she's* not melancholy,' struck in Jack; 'she's one of the brightest and cleverest, nicest women I know.'

'But she'll do nothing but what she chooses,' said Adelaide. 'She won't go to races or things of that kind.'

'But she's very lady-like about it,' said Hilda, who, in spite of herself, venerates Miss Maitland's consistent, beautiful life, 'and she is a busy, clever soul.'

'She certainly has often capital people staying with her,' said Adelaide.

'And it's a nice house to visit at,' said Jack. 'They say she has a rag-tag kind of population going about her. I never see any but the best society there.'

'When do the Græmes return home?' asked Hilda.

Next week, Miss Maitland told me to-day,' said Lady Morell. 'They've been detained in London by business.'

'Perhaps Helène is picking up a husband for herself,' said Adelaide. 'She'll go off before Clotilde, I expect.'

'Well, I must write to Fitz, I suppose,' said Hilda, seating herself wearily at the writing-table, 'or I shall be getting another thunderer to-morrow. How I *do* hate writing letters!

Mother, you won't think I am brained on the hunting field if I don't write you every fortnight—will you, honey? I shall be speaking the most exquisite Irish when I come back. Whoy did you give me your good ear, mother? I can't help speaking as the people about me do.'

CHAPTER XIII.

'The heart that trusts for ever sings,
And feels as light as it had wings;
A well of peace within it springs,
Come good or ill.
Whate'er to-day, to-morrow brings,
It is His will.'

'I HAVE so much to tell you,' wrote Gertrude to Fred, 'and my heart is so full, I scarcely know where to begin. But, Fred, I must tell you all. We have never any secrets from each other. You remember how mother, dear mother, used to take us sometimes together, sometimes separately, to teach us the Bible and talk to us about Jesus. I used to wonder how she liked the Bible so much. And you recollect how she used to come when we were in bed, and sing to us, and talk to us; and I thought it, oh! so unkind of God to take her away from us. I am always wanting her so much. But now I know all about it. Do you remember that picture in the big Bible of a shepherd carrying a tired sheep in his arms, and the little lambs trotting after him, and always looking up because it is their mother he is carrying. Well, now I see that Jesus often takes away our mothers and dearest friends just that we may look up after them, and be made to think about our souls. And now I feel there is nothing so important or so good as to belong to Christ. I can't put it in proper words, but I have been made to know what a frivolous, selfish life I have always led, and have found that, notwithstanding it all,

Jesus is willing to forgive me everything. And I have asked Him to do it, and to be my Saviour and Friend. He says, "I will in no wise cast thee out," and I am quite sure He means what He says. So you see, Fred darling, I belong now to Christ, and I want, above everything else, to be what He wants me to be, and to live as He would have me. I have got a *Pilgrim's Progress*, and it helps me so! I feel as if, wherever I am, I have now something to live for; and oh! I am so much happier, and I want you to belong to Christ too, and I shall never be satisfied till you do. You know how frightened I have always been at the very thought of death. Often I have lain awake just trembling, and even in the gayest times it would come in and make me miserable. But now, although I am still afraid of it, it is not in the same way, because I know Jesus will be with me, and help me through. Oh, it is a wonderful change! Be quick and write me, Fred, my own beloved brother, and believe me, ever your loving sister, 'GERTY.'

Fred got this letter in the evening, on his return to his lodgings after a busy day.

How he looked forward to Gerty's letters! they were always so full of home-news, of fun, and often of sharp but most amusing ridicule.

Aunt Dorothy, with all her whims and angles of character, was at the Fort, and he expected no end of diversion over the picture of her doings, and of Gertrude's wild impatience at them, in his letter to-night.

He had a disagreeable, shivery sensation about him this chill winter night, and his work in the Infirmary had not improved his physical condition.

Leaving his dinner untasted, he placed his chair close to the blazing fire, and opened his letter.

He read it through, then laid it on his knee, and gazed at the flames. He was conscious of only one sensation next to that of surprise, and that was, of thankfulness that he was alone.

Gertrude, his high-spirited, dashing, beautiful sister! what

change is this? what does it mean? The touching reference to his mother made his heart beat fast. How well he remembered those times,—sweet, hallowed times! and the Family-Bible! and that particular picture too, over which their two heads had bent so eagerly!

Ah! and then as he thought over the past the bright form of his mother passed away, and their home seemed for long empty and desolate. Their father grew more morose and stern, and but for Gertrude he felt as if he would have long ago run away from home. With no attempt to rule or lord it over him, she had nevertheless always exerted a powerful influence upon him. She was just the sort of girl 'a fellow' was proud of, and she was so transparent and 'aefauld,' that whatever she said you knew she entirely meant.

'And she is so steady and unchanging,' he mused on, 'never loses a friend, faithful as well as enthusiastic in her love, and generous to a fault in her estimate of others.'

Such was the substance of the reflections that filled Fred's mind. This change, he felt sure, was no passing fancy. It was something real she had undergone, something, too, that was satisfying her, and of such excellence that she could not rest till she had poured out her heart to him about it, and entreated him to seek it for himself.

'It doesn't seem to make her moody, at any rate,' he kept on thinking; 'and she says she has been so afraid of death, but that now'—taking up the letter, and reading it very carefully—'she isn't afraid, at least not so much so; yes, she wouldn't exaggerate a hair-breadth. Well, that's something, for it is awful to see death, whatever some of the fellows may pretend,' and the spectacle of two deaths he had witnessed during the day in the surgical ward stood out vividly before him. The one was that of a workman who had been terribly injured by machinery in the manufactory where he worked, and who was brought into the Infirmary, as it proved, to die. The case had interested Fred deeply, and he had attended him with unwearied care.

At the end, and with his last breath, the dying man whispered into Fred's ear, 'Young master, take warning by me. I have scoffed at religion, and hardened my heart against the advice of my best friends. Now I'm dying, a—n—d a lost eternity is before me.' And with his head on Fred's shoulder, and a look of agony in his glazed eye, he died.

The other case was that of a young married woman who had slipped her foot in the crowded street, and been ridden over by a cab; too poor to call a doctor to her home, she was taken to the Infirmary. Her peaceful resignation in her great sufferings struck all who came near her, and her gratitude for the care bestowed upon her was touching to see. When some of those around her spoke of her accident as 'cruel' and 'hard,' she gently rebuked them, and looked as pained, one woman remarked, as if 'they had been speaking ill of her father.'

'And so you are,' she answered plainly. 'It *is* my Father in heaven you are calling cruel.'

'What!' retorted the caviller, 'Father! na, na! Nae father would send his child out and run her over by a wild horse!'

'Besides,' said another who knew her Bible, 'what does that mean where it says, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, lest at any time thou shouldest dash thy foot against a stone," and, "Thy foot He'll not let slide"? The very thing's happened to you that He said He would keep from you. I used to think, when I was a silly child, that the angels actually did keep us from falls and bruises. It's a whiley since all that was knocked out of me! Humph!' with a defiant toss of the head.

'The exception only proves the rule!' answered the suffering woman. 'I believe God's angels do watch over His people, and that but for their care our lives would be full of accidents.'

This woman's patience told on all near her in the ward, and was not without its influence on the bright young assistant who ministered to her. Many a little delicacy he brought her,

and gently and carefully he dressed her painful wounds. And when his master, the great doctor, told her in answer to her earnest question, 'Would she ever get better?' that while there was life there was hope, but that her case was a serious one, she felt that sentence of death was on her. She involuntarily clasped her hands and exclaimed, 'Oh, how delightful to think that I shall so soon be with Jesus!' And this same day her gentle spirit had winged its flight without fear, ah! in the most joyful anticipation of being with her Lord.

In far less time than we have taken to write these lines did these scenes, and the reflections to which they gave rise, pass through Fred's mind. From thinking he fell to dosing; and when his landlady, far on in the night, came to see why he had never rung, she found the fire gone out, and the young gentleman fast asleep in his chair.

'Ah! and my notes not transcribed, no work done!' he exclaimed as he shook himself awake. 'I must sit up, Mrs. Clarke; but what queer dreams I've had,' he soliloquized, 'about Rose, and mother, and Gerty, and that dying man. I feel quite giddy,' he said aloud, as he grasped a chair to save him from staggering. 'After all, I believe I must give up work for to-night. So, Mrs. Clarke,

> "If you're waking, call me,
> Call me early, mother dear."'

CHAPTER XIV.

'It is not enough to speak, but to speak true.'

THE short December days have set in, and the whole country is wrapped in a white mantle of snow. Gertrude has risen from the breakfast table this clear, crisp morning, and is preparing to take flight to her little sanctum, a small sitting-room opening from her bedroom, when her father said abruptly, 'You and Mrs. Cookson are much improved, Gertrude. The dinner last night was A, 1; I'm sure the Murries never tasted better curry in Madras itself, and the *entrées* might have been cooked at the "Grand Hotel."'

'I'm so very glad,' said Gerty, whose study of cookery-books during the last few weeks had been unremitting, with sparkling eyes.

'Didn't you think the whole thing a success, Dorothea?' turning to his sister, a little hurt that she should not have given her opinion spontaneously.

'I did, Archibald; but I wish Gerty hadn't forgotten the dinner-rolls, bread has such a shabby look!'

'O Aunt Dorothy!' Gertrude began, blazing up at this very unnecessary and public exposure of what had apparently escaped her father.

'No dinner-rolls!' throwing down his paper. 'I had one. What do you mean? not possible you forgot *them*, Gertrude?'

'Yes, I did,' she answered promptly, falling from her momentary pinnacle of exaltation into a very slough of mor-

tification. 'I quite forgot them; but if you had only been quiet, Aunt Dorothy, the thing would have passed. But it's just like you, you always try to provoke and bully me,' and hastening to the door, she swept out of the room, closing it with a bang.

'Nice, pleasant-tempered young woman,' said Miss Ellerslie, walking to the window. 'Gertrude is not improved in her temper; I am sorry to see the same uncontrolled outbursts, not to put it stronger. I am surprised, Archibald, that you have never sent her from home. It's the only way to teach young people self-control and the ways of the world. Just fancy the Ladies Berry or any of my London friends going on like that. I shouldn't at all like them to see Gertrude in one of her flare-ups.'

No reply.

'If only she had more of your manner, Archibald. I always think you are the most perfectly well-bred man I *ever* saw; but from your childhood you were that.'

This small piece of delicate flattery worked effectually on the rising anger in Colonel Ellerslie's breast.

'You do not think Gertrude's manners b—a—d—wanting in any way?' he at last said. 'I think she is, as a rule, so self-possessed and well-bred.'

'Oh! she has a dash and beauty certainly, but that outspokenness and rudeness often, to me at least,' in a tone intended to be pathetic, 'are very trying. My nature is so sensitive, and'—

'Bothersome,' was the word that rose to Colonel Ellerslie's lips, but it did not pass them. He was sincerely attached to his sister, but her jealous *exigeante* nature was often inconvenient, although she rarely allowed it to show itself before him.

'Gertrude is so very true and honest,' he remarked. 'No beating about the bush with her. I wouldn't have her changed in that for all the cold polish and veneering in the world. I couldn't put up with it.'

'But surely you may have refinement and truth together, Archibald?'

'Well ye—s, yes, certainly.'

'Besides—it is really perhaps a trifle—but—I didn't quite like the solitary dinner-roll, over, I suppose, from the night before, when we had them, and baked up to make it soft; didn't think it so very straightforward to put that to you. From what Gertrude herself said, you saw how she had counted upon her little preconcerted plan blinding you to her forgetfulness. I happened to pass the dining-room as she was giving Simmonds some directions about the table, and I overheard her say to him, "Don't forget about the Colonel's dinner-roll."'

Colonel Ellerslie looked put out, but made no answer, and presently his sister left the room. He got up and walked to the window, thrust his hands down into his coat-pockets, and remained buried in thought. He was satisfied of his daughter's transparent honesty of heart and purpose even in such small particulars as this. But how, without asking her, and so hurting her feelings by even an insinuation, he should be able to clear her to his sister was a puzzle.

At this moment Simmonds entered to clear away the breakfast things, and at the risk of a little sacrifice of dignity, Colonel Ellerslie took a direct line of action.

'You had no dinner-rolls last night, Simmonds. How was that?'

'Well, sir, they was forgotten to be ordered in Kilbarton till just the last moment, when it was too late.'

'Humph! Some people have so many weighty matters on their minds that I fancy they consider things of this kind not worth remembering. But I just want to inform you, Simmonds, that an oversight like this stamps the whole character of a dinner. It has already been remarked upon to me.'

'Aweel, sir,' said the privileged old servant, 'they've little to do that would pass ony sic a remark; for to my thinkin', your dinner last night was the perfectest entertain-

ment that ever graced mahogany. Miss Gertrude has been at thae cookery books morning, noon, and night; and her and Mrs. Cookson is as anxious to please you as if you was her Majesty hersel'.'

This was crushing, and the Colonel did not immediately reply.

'And for the dinner-rolls! there was one to your napkin, sir.'

'Ah yes!' coming back to the original subject of attack. 'How was that? Did Miss Ellerslie not wish *me* to want it?'

'Aweel, sir, it was *my* doing, that. I wanted to put it in your napkin, and Miss Gerty at first said yes. She didn't mind the others missing it if you was right. But after it was in, an' everything complete, she came runnin' in to say for to take it out, it wasna just straightforward-like; that she would rather you knew the worst, an' get the scold herself, than have you maybe misled to fancyin' a' was right. You're that thrang carvin', you see, sir, that you'd never notice maybe what the others had if you was right yourself. And that was *my* hope and *intention* too; but Miss Gerty cam' to see through me, and feared it might be deceivin' you. It's an unco pity you wudna have the dinners alley Rooshians; no that I have any favour to *them*, but it wud save *you*, sir.'

'Then how was the roll there, if Miss Ellerslie desired you to take it away from my place?'

'I just didna do it, sir,' answered Simmonds with a dogged shake of his head. 'I thought, thinks I, if the Cornel would only just *think* the rolls was a' right, he would have an easy mind—have no call up of the slate afore folk, and enjoy a good dinner. So I never let on to Miss Gerty, but just let the roll sit in your napkin.'

Colonel Ellerslie made no further remark, but turned on his heel and made for the library.

An hour later, when Gertrude sought him there, she was struck by his gentler manner towards her, and by him looking almost wistfully at her as he murmured, 'My good, honest child.'

'O Papa!' she exclaimed, 'I'm not good, and you know that, but I am trying to keep down my temper; and I've just been asking Aunt Dorothy's pardon for my rudeness to her this morning,'

Her father gazed at her in surprise, but did not speak.

'And I've been searching in that *Country House Cookery-book*, to see if there is any way of extemporizing dinner-rolls out of plain loaf-bread, and have found out such a neat dodge,' she added with sparkling eyes. 'So the next time I forget, you shall see what a dainty *petit pain* will be produced!'

'I'm a true prophet, Gerty,' said her father. 'I always said you would get to love cookery if only you would concentrate your mind upon it. You're getting quite enthusiastic!'

'Quite,' she answered, rather drearily, however, as she left the room. 'How wonderful,' she thought, as she flew back to her little boudoir. 'What has changed Papa since breakfast-time? are my prayers about it answered already?

CHAPTER XV.

'If loving hearts were never lonely,
If what they wished might always be,—
Accepting what they looked for only,—
They might be glad, but not in Thee.
We need as much the cross we bear,
As air we breathe, as light we see;
It brings us to Thy side in prayer,
It binds us to our faith in Thee.'

FOR the last few weeks Gertrude has been 'holding on' in the new and narrow path on which she has so hopefully entered. She has had sundry sharp fights with her temper, but has managed, prayerfully and watchfully, to keep it in some sort of check. A mingled feeling of self-pleasing at her success, and of certainty of future progress in this victory over her besetting sins, has unconsciously entwined itself with the fabric of more humble thoughts; and this morning, without the buckling on of the heavenly armour, she has rushed into the conflict and been worsted.

She has lost peace; and although she has sought forgiveness from her Lord, following up her confession by going to ask Aunt Dorothy's forgiveness too, a dull sense of failure and defeat has seized upon her. The temporary flush of pleasure from the victory she has achieved—for it is no light matter for *her* to have begged Aunt Dorothy's pardon

—gives place to a feeling of weariness. She sinks down in her rocking-chair by the fire with empty hands and a great tumult of thoughts in her head.

'Temptation rarely comes,' says a wise man, 'in working hours. It is in their leisure that men are made or marred.' This saying may be emphasized in the case of women. A tendency prevails with many a woman to be busy enough at set times, or with special duties, but to dawdle or let the hands hang down when no special effort calls forth her energy; and it is precisely at such times of relaxation and rebound that temptation streams in. The subtle wave spreads through the chambers of the imagination, searches into their every corner, and suits itself to each peculiar temperament and taste. Satan knows this work well. He is at it every moment. Alas! how many fall unconscious victims into his net, which he so assiduously spreads for them, and out of which they might keep their feet if their hands were full.

'I can't think why there is no letter from Fred this morning,' Gertrude muses, 'nor Rose, nor anybody; and there, I declare it has begun to snow again,' glancing at the window, 'and Papa will be saying ever so many things about my going out, although I promised Kate Murrie last night to go over to Garnlee this afternoon. It's just Aunt Dorothy who has put him up to that too, and I shall be having constant skirmishes with her. Whatever made me ask her to come! but then I thought, of course, I was to be away. If only she hadn't been here I might have got on better, and I do want to get on. What a nice girl Kate Murrie seems! I did like her last night. But what a family, and no mother! just Kate and that crab-tree-looking factotum body of a nurse, or housekeeper, or whatever she is! How Kate has to be constantly working among that tribe of brothers and sisters! Well, it's cheerful; very different from me, having nobody, worse than nobody, for I have actually to fly up here to get out of Aunt Dorothy's way for a while. And she doesn't care for music or German, and prefers driving to working. *Ahime!* a fine time I shall have! And nobody

to fall back upon but Cousin Helen, and she is so busy one can't always be seeing her, though, oh! she is good and kind to me. And *what* an unselfish, beautiful life hers is! and nobody to cheer her on, but everybody hanging upon her for everything, and never a grumble or a frown. And the weddings over, the girls gone, and Rose away, and everybody getting flat and dull. The very year just about run out. And Fred perhaps not coming home for Christmas even.' And of one other she thought as gone, whose presence would have blessed and cheered her, and who had his own solitary and self-denying path, she knew, to tread, but who was treading it, she felt sure, in that noble, disinterested way which had so arrested and impressed her. Then their talks came back to mind, while the freshness of her hope in the new life, as she too had set out on it, contrasted painfully with her present listless and grumbling state of mind. 'I'm sure,' she mused, '*I* don't feel to-day like a Christian, I seem so cold and dull about the whole thing, so unlike what I've been. I believe it's all Aunt Dorothy! Oh! if only she'd go away I know I should get on better; but how can I ever come to be like Christ,' with a hush over her heart, 'when I'm for ever crossed and irritable because of her?'

A great and terrible feeling of discontent at her circumstances succeeded this train of thought; doubts of God's goodness in appointing her such a hard battlefield in which to fight her way, came sweeping over her.

The tide of suspicion and distrust grew strong. She almost started with horror at the terrible state into which she felt herself drifting. She had no one at hand to help her.

As if to increase her distress, a view of her past life seemed to rise in a succession of scenes before her now retrospective eye, and in particular, the desperate selfishness of her life as in broad contrast with Cousin Helen's, and with that of other true Christians of whom she had heard and read. For with the usual quick-sightedness of one recently converted, Gertrude mentally separated persons—professing Christians, too—into distinct

classes. Times when she had triumphed over others, when she had been reckless of the feelings of others in the delicious gratification of her own, start forth before her mind's eye; times when she had shirked, openly too,—for concealment or subterfuge was no part of her character,—unpleasant duty, or let others shift for themselves, so that she should be left undisturbed to follow her own pursuits, troop up and range themselves before her mental gaze. Ah! upon what a dark, dismal, backward track she found herself being forced to look! In particular, one act, the blackness of which in the long distance of a year had begun to grow fainter, stood out again, looming and remorseful, when, by her wit and dash, she had drawn from Clotilde Græme a certain Walter Freer, who, meeting Clotilde in London, had followed her to Lonshire, believing himself to be in love with her. Gertrude, however, crossed his path, and soon captivated the high intellect and the not very deep feelings of the young barrister. Gertrude, heart-whole, amused herself in her sparkling, thoughtless way, while Clotilde, who had little experience in such affairs, but whose warm feelings went out trustfully to her lover, saw him with dismay disengaging himself from her society and losing his heart to the beautiful but inconsiderate Gertrude.

'*She* has plenty to love and admire her,' thought poor Clotilde, when she came to guess the painful truth, 'she might have left Walter alone; all the world at her feet, but Walter, she might have had!'

On just such a day as this a year ago, when all the young people in the neighbourhood were skating on the lake at the Fort, Walter had said his say to Gertrude, and she wakened up to the fact of his devotion, which others had plainly seen.

She had not meant to lead him on, she had not meant to crush poor Clotilde's happy hopes, nor to wound this man in his affections. But her thoughtlessness of the feelings of others, her enjoyment of the society of clever men, her want of observation of the pale face and listless expression of poor Clotilde as she began to miss Walter from her own side and

find him ever at Gertrude's, all this most real and cruel mischief she had done.

Clotilde had been away ever since, but was coming home to-day. How would she act to Gertrude? and of what a painful date in both their lives was this day the anniversary!

For Gertrude had known all the original relations between Walter and Clotilde. Yes, all; and she had blighted the happiness of two young lives.

Strange her conduct had never appeared in such dark colours as to-day! It had pained her, it had put a barrier between Clotilde and her, it had driven Walter in anger from her side. But to-day the thing rose up before her as a sin against God, standing sharply to the front of a crowd of other sins.

An overwhelming sense of shame came over her, of her having missed the aim of her existence, of having lost time and opportunity to make her life noble and good.

Hitherto, since she had become so deeply interested in divine things, the love of God and the grace of Christ had filled her soul. The beauty of His works of creation, their majesty, their music, had occupied her heart; His goodness in drawing her, His care in giving her friends to arouse her, and help her in the new life, these had occupied her heart and mind. She had, like Jacob of old, been seeing God but as in a dream. But this is not enough. The ladder has been there, down which the angels have brought messages of love to her from heaven, and up which they have been carrying her prayers. But not till now has she felt herself truly a sinner; and falling on her knees in an agony of contrition and grief, she confessed, because she felt herself a sinner. Her self-satisfaction and reliance are gone. She is no longer enough for herself. She wrestled; and as she fancied she saw the figure of a retreating God, she prayed yet more earnestly, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' And she was blessed. She saw God, after she saw herself,—saw Him face to face in the face of Jesus Christ.

She is no longer solitary, lonely, or misunderstood; she finds herself one of a large and peculiar, but blessed family. She is now a daughter of the Heavenly Father, and Christ is her Elder Brother.

CHAPTER XVI.

'Do not, then, stand idly waiting
For some greater work to do;
Oh! improve each passing moment,
For the moments may be few.
Go and toil in any vineyard,
Do not fear to do or dare;
If you want a field of labour,
You can find it anywhere.'

AS Gertrude set out after lunch for St. Helen's, having seen her father and Aunt Dorothy off on a drive to the Hall, she had a hope in her heart which sent the warm glow to her cheek and a bound into her step. She may change and fail, and according to her present estimate of herself she certainly will; but she has now a refuge and strength which cannot change and will never fail, and to Him she may repair in the crowd or in the present solitude, and to Him she may unburden all her heart. A certain independence of circumstances, too, found its way into her soul, together with a great longing to serve her Lord, and to be counted worthy to work for Him, or even to suffer.

No wonder that as she took her place beside Cousin Helen, her bright, glowing face should call forth the remark, 'Why, Gerty—surely—surely you have seen the King in His beauty!'

'Oh yes! Cousin Helen, I have,' said Gerty simply but almost passionately,—'I have seen Him in His beauty, and found Him in the grace of His love to me. I feel His presence in all these beauties,' pointing to the white, undulating

hills that, like a *garde moulante*, lay glistening in the sunshine round St. Helen's, 'and in that sky, and in *everything!*'

'He is not far from any one of us,' said Cousin Helen, laying her hand tenderly on Gertrude's shoulder; 'and remember the clouds and mists which hide the sun from us, rise from *earth*, and the sun is there all the same though they often hinder us from seeing him.'

Then Gertrude told her friend of her morning's experience. Miss Maitland listened attentively.

'I just hope this dreadful suspicion and discontent won't come back,' said Gerty as she finished, 'and that I shall have this peace always. Do you think they will?' with a very anxious look.

'That will depend on where your peace is.'

'How do you mean, Cousin Helen? It is here,' placing her hand on her heart.

'When the storm ceases,' said Miss Maitland, 'there is a quietness and a calm. But the winds are in the caves. When sudden temptation comes, the winds rush from their caves. They buffet and beat upon the soul, and if one's peace is in one's self—one's *renewed* self even—it goes; but if it is in Jesus, —if He Himself is our peace,—the fiercest storms may assail, but they cannot move the Rock.'

'Yet it is terrible to think of the storms, Cousin Helen.'

'So it is; but what surprises me is not the storms, but the quantity of sunshine God gives. It always seems so wonderful that in a world on which sin brought a curse, there should be so much comfort and blessing left. None but God could have managed it so. And whether in your life and mine the storm or sunshine is to predominate, our true peace and happiness will be in having our wills—His—level with God's. Look often at His life—spotless, pure, simple, heavenly-minded; His meat and drink to do the will of His Father—the very thing we often think a cross.'

Gertrude did not speak, but the words sank into her heart.

'And now, dear,' said Miss Maitland, 'I have heavy news; Dr. Wright says I must go away!'

'Away! Cousin Helen?' said Gertrude, looking anxiously up into the sweet, calm face, and noticing for the first time to-day how pale it was, and yet how the colour came and went in the thin cheeks.

'Yes; he was here yesterday—indeed I had to send for him; and he says I should never have come north in October, and that I must go the first milder day.'

Gertrude laid her head on Miss Maitland's lap, and groaned out, 'Where to?'

'To Mentone or Cannes. The only difficulty is to get there so late, but he says I must try. This is our first frost; you see it always tries me.'

'O Cousin Helen! would staying in two rooms, as you did one winter before, not do?'

'Dr. Wright says no; that I am not really so strong as I was then, and would be sooner brought down. But, Gerty, when the summer comes, please our heavenly Father, I shall be back.'

Gertrude could not speak.

'I feel the winds rushing out of the caves already, Cousin Helen,' she said presently; 'it does seem—hard!'

'No—oh no!' said Miss Maitland, laying her hand upon the impatient lips, 'stop the port-holes, and keep them out at once.'

'And what about Mrs. Græme and the girls? They were to have been home to-day, were they not?'

'Yes, but I telegraphed to them this sudden change. And now I have a great deal I want you to do for me when I am away, and one thing specially,—these Murries, I am taken up about them.'

'And Kate was just talking about you last night, and saying what a help you would be to *her* too, and now'—

'I want *you* to help her,' said Miss Maitland.

'*Me!* Cousin Helen.'

'Dear girl, she has a heavy handful. Hers is no play-life.

'They seem dreadfully poor,' said Gerty, rousing into interest about her new friend, while some of the winds began to fall back into their caves. 'I never saw such a *ménage* as they have at Garnlee. There is some mystery besides mere poverty about them.'

'I can tell you,' said Miss Maitland. 'Major Murrie drinks. What was the original cause of this I do not know; but his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, managed somehow to keep him tolerably straight, and being in India, it was simply as much as his life was worth to indulge in such habits. But on his return home, and with her subsequent death, all restraint went, and he fell deeper and deeper. They have been living in Aberdeen for the last year or two; but as a forlorn hope, the doctors have got him to leave the temptations of a large city, and try a country life. His only hope, I believe, is in *never* touching drink of any kind.'

Gertrude thought of her father's fine wines the night before, and of Kate's white, troubled little face and Major Murrie's excited red one. The thought made her shiver.

'Have they kind friends?' at last she asked.

'Yes; his wife's relations are most generous to him. They are to pay the rent of Garnlee, and give him a new start. The eldest son is in the army, and the eldest daughter was married in India, but died there. Two of these small children are hers, and I fancy what their father pays for them is one chief means of support for the entire family!'

'Who is that hard-featured woman who seems to live with them?'

'Carruthers—Miss Carruthers. She is an old upper sort of servant, and very much attached to the children of her late mistress. Indeed, they were sent from India to her care, and now she'—

'Rules them with a rod of iron, I should say,' interrupted Gertrude; 'how I feel for Kate!'

'She *is* to be felt for, and I think you may be a great comfort and help to her if you will.'

'Will! O Cousin Helen, how glad I should be if I could!'

'You could teach her many things. Her education seems to have been neglected. She has a perfect thirst for knowledge, and is a clever girl. But she is very speculative and queer in her views.'

At the end of a long talk about the Murries, Gertrude came away. A new hope was in her heart; she was going to try to help another—she, who had been counting on getting help by drinking it in from another, was to get it by imparting what she had to another with less than herself, it seemed.

She walked smartly along the crisp roads, short cuts across fields being out of the question to-day, and by the time she reached Garnlee it was far on in the afternoon.

This is her second visit only to the Murries. The only members of the family whom she knows are Major Murrie and Kate, whom she has met on several occasions in the evening.

Garnlee—never in the perfection of order so characteristic of both the Fort and the Hall—has to-day a very tumble-down look, Gertrude thought.

The gate opening from the high-road into the avenue stands on its hinges; big stones lie here and there across the road; while the black, leafless trees, from which the kindly covering snow seems to have been shaken, have a dreary look.

As Gertrude approaches the door, a confused sound of voices falls upon her ear, and after knocking with the end of her umbrella against the front door, the bell being broken, she moves in the direction of the clamour.

The house of Garnlee is a long, low, two-storied building, with a great many very small windows looking out upon the rough road forming the so-called 'avenue,' while those to the back are a little more ornamental, and open, several of them, upon some very rank grass called 'the lawn.' An orchard to the right, and a broad, beautiful stream, beyond

which meadows stretch away towards the neighbouring hills, make up a landscape which even on this winter's afternoon is most picturesque, and suggestive of rare loveliness in spring and summer.

The sounds increased, and Gertrude's curiosity rose high. Turning the corner at the gable-end, she found a tribe of children apparently being run after by the individual Carruthers. She seemed newly to have discovered and pounced upon them, and is giving chase to the luckless little creatures, a large pair of brown 'taws' dangling from her side, which every now and then she brandishes over their heads, letting them fall but lightly on the successive victims of her 'just?' indignation.

'That's for you, Dick,' aiming a slap at a sturdy little urchin, who, however, neatly jinked the not very well-aimed intention, 'for venturin' to clim' that tree when I daured ye to't, and tearin' yer jacket to that degree that I'll hae to sit up till midnight mendin' at it; an' if ever I see *you near* the milk-house' —a delusive term for the shelf with a couple of bowls of milk—'if ever I see *you*, Frank Murrie, *near* the milk-house, it'll be ten pawmies instead o' five,' coming down on a little up-turned brown hand with a very light infliction.

So followed in rapid, breathless succession a series of castigations, the small victims tearing about the 'green,' jinking, shouting, tumbling, rolling themselves up again, and offering themselves anew with the pertest of faces and gestures to the panting Carruthers.

'I've caught you, you wicked boy,' seizing by the back of the neck a small, fair, rather delicate-looking boy; 'now, Gussy, if *ever* I catches you at the damson jar again, you'll get a whole half of a paraphrase to learn by heart.'

Gussy Trevor looked very frightened, and putting his finger in his mouth, began to cry, whereupon his sister Flora, a young lady of six, rushed to the rescue, and began dragging him away. But Miss Carruthers made a clutch at her, exclaiming that no one should interfere with her authority, language quite over Miss Flora's head, but which set her off crying too.

Leaving the two 'silly bairns' to cry themselves content, Miss Carruthers, catching sight of the twins, Alice and May, ploughing through the snow-field instead of taking the conventional road, called out, 'Have ye on yir Sunday boots? My certies, if ye hae, they'll be done for!' But the twins shouted back, that they had on their 'everyday shoes,' which information had a mollifying effect on Miss Carruthers; and calling to Dick and Flora, who had set off to meet the twins, and waving to Charlie and Ned—who had run from the field of battle on the principle that discretion, not to say flight, was the better part of valour—to come all away into 'their teas,' the scene of clamour became speedily deserted and still.

By this time Kate had joined Gerty, finding her at the end of the house in silent wonderment at the scene which had just been enacted.

'What does it all mean?' she asked of Kate, as they turned into the house.

'Oh! the children are always in scrapes, and Carruthers sometimes waits till the end of the day for the punishments. It would take her up too much to do it at the time. They are *such* pickles! I wonder if everybody's children are like ours?' added Kate, with a moistening in her grey eyes.

'You speak as if you were the mother of them all!' said Gerty, laughing.

'Well, I and Carruthers are all the mothers they have, poor things!'

'What an awful creature *she* seems!' significantly.

'Who?' opening her eyes wide.

'That Carruthers body.'

'Carruthers!' in a tone of perfect bewilderment. 'She is—oh—Miss Ellerslie! she is the best of people. She does everything for everybody— She is our—one— What *should* we ever do without Carruthers!'

'But evidently her system doesn't work,' continued Gerty; 'they'll *never* improve.'

This seemed to put things in a perfectly new light to Kate;

but there was such a dash of treason in the suggestion that her loyal heart put it away.

'She isn't *really* hard to them; but if she hadn't the look of it, they would never do anything they are told.'

'I'm not sure of that,' with a shake of the head. 'I'm sure *you* get them to do what you tell them without all that flourishing of taws and galloping all over the place?'

'Yes—yes—but then I'm their sister; and Carruthers says, too, that you may lecture and task *girls*, but that nothing of the kind will impress *boys*. *They* must be made to feel what she says.'

'What's going to be done now?' asked Gerty, whose heart went out after the chubby, rollicking boys as they somersaulted and shouted on their way to the house.

'We're going to have tea,' answered Kate, who did not press her visitor to go in, but proposed rather to accompany her down the avenue.

'I want to see Dick again,' said Gerty. 'I never saw such a pair of mischievous black eyes; and besides, you haven't introduced me to Miss Carruthers!'

So there was no help for it, and Kate, with an anxious heart, led the way to the school-room.

What a room! The dirty walls, with quite a small gallery of grotesque pictures adorning them; some of these were original, —worked out on any available clean spot,—others were stuck on; a ghost of a carpet, a plain deal table with a snowy white cloth at the tea-tray end, and a couple of backless forms, made up the furniture, while a very doubtful fire burned in the rusty grate. Books and slates, broken fishing-rods, one or two headless dolls, a large basket of stockings to darn, and a big band-box, with a collection of hats needing mending,—to put it mildly,—formed some of the outstanding objects in the room.

'This is Miss Ellerslie, Carruthers, from the Fort, where we were dining last night,' said Kate, leading her new acquaintance straight up to that functionary.

She was standing 'sugaring the cups.' As the girls approached

her, she raised her eyes, and stopping her operations for a second, 'made a bow,' as Dick whisperingly expressed it into Frankie's ear.

She was a striking-looking woman, and Gerty felt the force of her character with that first quick, penetrating glance. She had oval black eyes, a sallow complexion, with a quantity of dark hair hanging in lank curls about her face, while many a line and wrinkle told of anxiety and care. She was tall and lithe, with a capacity for whisking about which was extraordinary. A thorough Scotchwoman, she delighted in her nationality, and was proud of her accent.

'You've a busy time of it,' said Gerty, glancing round the table at which the children began to range themselves.

No answer.

'How is Major Murrie?' she next asked, turning to Kate, and wondering what the head of the family did with himself.

'He—s—he went to Kilbarton to-day,' Kate answered.

Gertrude felt the oval eyes fix upon her, but the next moment a thud was heard on the table, and Miss Carruthers, lifting her hands and closing her eyes, while the whole party stood up, uttered the words:

> 'Some hae meat,
> An' canna eat;
> An' some can eat,
> But want it;
> But we hae meat,
> An' we can eat,
> An' so the Lord be thankit.'

'What's the maitter?' exclaimed Carruthers as little Flora Trevor began to cry.

'She'll not have her porridge,' answered Dick, brandishing his spoon preparatory to diving it into his own plateful.

'Oh yes, dearie!' said Kate, turning round to her small niece. 'Take this first, and then you'll have white tea, nice and sweet.'

'No, I won't,' making a thrust at Kate's eyes with her chubby fingers.

'I'll help you,' said Dick presently, having polished off his own share, and pulling Flora's plate before him.

But this was the signal for a wild burst from Flora, who pulled Dick's hair and pinched his cheek, while he steadily held on at her porridge, and soon cleared the plate.

There was plenty of porridge, Gerty felt glad to observe, with a scant enough supply of milk, however, or golden syrup for each.

Gertrude came away as the 'content' course—viz. milk and water with a *soupçon* of sugar in it—began, nodding and smiling round to the children, and shaking hands with Miss Carruthers in her usual gracious way.

Kate walked along the avenue with her.

'What makes the boys so quiet at tea-time?' Gerty asked; 'they're not like the same little rogues they were outside.'

'Oh! they're afraid of losing the tea and bread after their porridge if they're naughty. They don't mind the palmies much, but they're awfully hungry always.'

'And would she—Miss Carruthers—keep their *tea* from them?' in a tone of displeasure.

'She doesn't often; but it's the only way sometimes to manage the boys, she says.'

'Why doesn't your father look after *them?*'

'Oh!' with a cold shiver, 'he hasn't time, he says. He worked hard for us all in India, you see, Miss Ellerslie, and he says it's fair he should rest now and not be troubled.'

'You must come and see me very soon again, will you?' said Gerty, shaking hands warmly with Kate as they parted.

'Oh! I should like to, but I don't know when I'll get away. This was washing-week, you see, and we've all the stockings to darn and the clothes to mend.'

'Well, try and come, and bring some of the children with you, Dick and Flora especially. And if you really can't, I'll be over to see you.'

'Was she a angel?' asked Flora of Kate, as she was put-

ting the child to bed, and answering some of her questions about 'the pretty lady.'

'No, she's just a girl, and she has asked me to take you to see her in her beautiful house.'

The child clapped her hands, and dragging Kate's head down, whispered in her ear, 'Will Miss Cruthers go too?'

'No, darling.'

'Just you and me?'

'Perhaps.'

'O auntie, how lubly! Will we go to-morrow?'

'I can't tell; but go to sleep now, and we'll see when to-morrow comes.'

And Flora went to sleep to dream of angels, and of Kate, and of the vision of beauty that had flitted before her this bleak winter's day.

Far on in the night the slumbers of the soundest sleeper were broken by loud knocking at the hall-door, followed by sounds and words which made the children cower in their beds and lie trembling in the dark. It was their father tumbling home drunk, and shouting for more of the liquid fire which was burning out the human heart within him and reducing him to the level of the 'beasts that perish.'

CHAPTER XVII.

'Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place God meant for thee;
And should'st thou there small scope for actions see
Do not for this give room to discontent;
Nor let the time thou ow'st to God be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be,
In what concerns thy spiritual life, more free
From outward hindrance and impediment!'

GERTRUDE had been so interested in the novelties of her visit to-day, that she had taken

'No note of time save by its flight.'

The moon was up as she walked home amid the snow, and the stillness and solitude of the scene contrasted strangely with the scrambling, noisy household she had just left.

Her long absence had fortunately not been observed. Aunt Dorothy, who always rested before dinner, was in her room, and her father had gone out with Bruce, who, as he so frequently did, had turned up at the Fort.

As usual, Gertrude took a book while Arnot dressed her hair; but her thoughts would not settle to read, but busied themselves with Kate and her surroundings and home. For the first time in her life she felt almost ashamed of herself in her pretty pale pink cashmere dress with its trimmings of swan's down and soft lace ruffles. Her home had

never before seemed so luxurious; while her father, stiff and pompous though he was, was easy and well-pleased to-night.

Aunt Dorothy, who had been introduced to one or two persons of distinction in the course of her afternoon drive, was eloquent in her description of the marked attentions they had paid to her; and Bruce had the latest news of his sisters to retail.

The dinner was unchallenged, and the usual air of refinement and quiet was over everything. In what vivid contrast was all about her to the poor, threadbare sort of existence of the household at Garnlee!

Gertrude was the quietest of the little family party; but when, later in the evening, her father and Aunt Dorothy drew their small table to the drawing-room fire, and lost themselves in the intellectual perplexities of the chessboard, she exclaimed suddenly, dropping her embroidery work—

'I was at Garnlee to-day, Bruce.'

'Were you?'

'Yes. Have you been?'

'No.'

'You've no idea what amusing children the young Murries are — and Kate — *is* — a brick. You *must* go and see them!'

Bruce, whose shyness was almost proverbial, did not immediately reply.

'I believe you and I could help them—a little!' she continued eagerly. 'Have you any work planned out now that lame Johnny is away to the Infirmary, and that Mick's boys are at school?'

'No, but what could *I* ever do for any of them—these Murrie boys, Gerty?'

'They have no man person about them. Their father takes no interest in his children seemingly, and is often away for days at a time, Kate says. They can't afford a tutor, and you know so much, Bruce.'

Bruce's eyes gleamed at the unusual though quite just compliment from Gerty, but he expressed many doubts as to how he could benefit those forlorn little fellows.

'Go and call on Major Murrie, Bruce. You have such a nice way with children. Stuff your pockets with apples and nuts, you'll find your way to their hearts, I'm sure, and that accomplished, you'll find out how to help them. I mean to try and help Kate and the twins. They read tremendously, but their education is poor and queer of its kind. Kate can repeat *In Memoriam* without a slip; ditto *The Lord of the Isles*, and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Mrs. Browning's *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, but she does not know French or German, and hardly anything of music. But remember, you must carry along with you that Miss Carruthers,—she rules the roost,—and we shall only really succeed as we take her with us. I've been thinking so much about them, Bruce. It was Cousin Helen who put it into my head.'

Bruce fell readily into the scheme, as indeed he fell into anything which Gerty proposed or wished. He felt almost too happy about it all. What a change had come over his cousin herself! what sympathy there was now between them on the one thing! and what unlooked-for happiness was this, that she should ask *him* to help her in this self-denying, interesting work! They talked over every detail, and laid their plans, agreeing to seek higher wisdom than their own to direct them in what, however useful and good in itself, would require discretion and tact to start it well.

Next morning Bruce set off on his mission. He would call at Garnlee and reconnoitre his ground, and lay his plans accordingly. The frost was intense, and the clear crisp air sent a glow all over him. Hope was strong in the young man's heart, and life seemed to him full of opportunity and privilege. He had just got into Hilton, the neighbouring village, where everybody went for all that could be got short of Kilbarton, when he spied, coming out of Johnnie Cramm's shop,—the 'Tammie a'thing' of the place,—two boys laden with parcels and

bundles of various sizes. Johnnie and his shop being quite an institution in the place, we must pause and give the reader a glance at both. In appearance he is tall and lank, with a lithe figure, which whisks about, and is ready for everything in the way of business. He has light blue eyes, which it is alleged he keeps open even while he is asleep. His head is low and angular; a small quantity of light hair, somewhat on end, protrudes from the crown, while a 'wee pickle' of a much darker hue, intended to defy detection, is artistically introduced. He has large bony hands, which wriggle, eel-like, among his different wares; and a voice varying in its tone according to the station and purse of his customer.

A more wonderful repository of goods than Mr. Cramm's shop could not be imagined. A corner shop, one part fronting the principal street, the other displaying its small-paned but glittering window in the road which stretches away up into the country, it is intended to attract and draw over its threshold customers from the four quarters of the country. Such is the variety—and excellence, of course—of all Mr. Cramm's articles for sale, that he drives a roaring trade. In the street-window are Indian boxes of tea, sugars white and brown, cheese, butter, eggs, leeches, brushes, sugar-candy, castor oil; while boots and shoes dangle in the doorway, and dresses 'just in' flutter in the breeze. In the other window, directed country-wards, are hats, bonnets, gaudy flowers, jewellery, capes, frilling, reapers' hooks, seeds, toffy, Gregory's mixture, an old *Punch* or two, the *Day of Rest*, and an inevitable jar of leeches!

Occasionally Johnnie comes to his door to survey his daily re-arrangement of his articles, and now and then he addresses blandly a word of encouragement to hopeful-looking customers breathing in at the windows, assuring them that if they want anything that is not visible, it is certain to be inside. If only the interior arrangements of this wonderful *magasin* equalled those externally visible, it would stand peerless. But absolute chaos reigns within. The shelves are crowded with pamphlets and shawls, toys, biscuits, needles

and pins, hair-oil, scents, soap, etc. Yet, in the midst of this hopelessness, Johnnie—to his customers—is always good-natured and garrulous, a man with a perpetual smile. But that is 'all in the way of business,' as he remarks to his wife, a delicate, down-trodden creature, on whom he lets out his irritation, and who one day ventured to remark on the contrast of his temper and manner in public and in private. 'A man in my position is like a mirror, Janet. Smile on it, and it'll smile on you; frown on it, and it'll frown on you.' Janet felt there must be a great deal in such oracular words, though somehow she failed to grasp their meaning, and muttered under her breath something to the effect that Johnnie and his shop were 'a' face.'

Over the doorway hung a sign-board, intended to show forth a few of the outstanding features of the shop.

'JOHN CRAMM, BARBER.'

So it ran. 'Shaving done by me. Also sold here—Coals, drugs, bend-leather, and other sweetmeats. *Christians* sold or exchanged; poultry killed to order.'

Johnnie's conscience is elastic. He can attend revival meetings one week, to please his minister, who is influential, and the Kilbarton races the next,—at which, it must be confessed, he is much more in his element than at the 'meetin's,'—where the gentry and nobility flock. It is, of course, merely to 'show face,' as he remarks to Janet,—who puzzles herself hopelessly over the incongruity of his tastes,—and keep himself, or rather his shop, before the public notice. Sometimes, however, this chameleon-like character overshoots its mark, or rather shoots in the wrong direction, and the well-merited discomfiture and defeat of such time-serving hypocrisy as Johnnie Cramm's overtake his false heart. Instead, however, of multiplying instances of his character and style of doing business, we shall sufficiently describe them both by relating one or two incidents which occurred in the earlier part of this winter day.

It was during a time of 'revival' in the country-side, and Johnnie had been 'thrang at the meetin's' after shop-hours.

No wonder that his minister had 'hopes' of this erratic member of his flock.

'Johnnie,' he said one night, 'do you ever speak to people?'

'Speak! bless ye, sir,' with an appalling grin, 'I'm aye speakin'! If it wasna for a thimblefu' o' speerits at night, to clear my win'pipe, I wad never open my mouth again.'

'Yes, yes! but I mean speak to them about—ahem—their souls, and death, you know. I think if you tried that a little more you would find it to your advantage.'

'Div ye, sir?' quite mistaking the minister's meaning, who of course was thinking of spiritual growth; 'aweel, aweel, I'll try.'

This morning, full of the new idea, Johnnie entered his shop. Presently a customer, requiring his services as barber, came in, and was formally seated behind the screen where such operations were privately conducted. The initial stages of shaving were proceeded with in perfect silence, Johnnie meanwhile working himself up to the necessary pitch of assurance; then seizing the razor, to which, in his zeal, he had given an extra sharpening, he exclaimed, while the razor gleamed in his customer's eye, 'Sir, are you prepared for instant death?'

Believing himself to be in the hands of a lunatic, the gentleman sprang up, and freeing himself from the towel carefully tucked round his neck, and flinging out his arm to defend himself from the supposed murderer, he seized his hat, bolted out at the door, and fled, leaving Johnnie, with his mouth wide open, to dilate to Janet on this failure of his first, and as he vowed his last, endeavour to speak to folks about things with which he had 'naething ado.' Johnnie had scarcely recovered from this defeat, when a lady from one of the 'county seats,' as he expressed it, came in, and asked for 'this month's *Leisure Hour*;' she understood Mr. Cramm had 'everything in his shop.'

'Certainly,' he replied with his broadest grin, placing a chair for the lady. Poor woman! well for her she had a seat! Then began a wild hunt among the crowded shelves,

varied with the crack of pulling out drawers and the thud of pushing them in, but no vestige of a *Leisure Hour*.

'I see nothing like it,' the lady kept saying; but Johnnie merely smiled, and resumed the hunt in a fresh corner. At last her patience gave way; she rose to go, when Johnnie started forward and said, 'I can't lay my hands upon it, mem, but I can give you six weeks of *Christians*.' The lady, however, bowed and walked out.

'Come awa', my man,' exclaimed Johnnie, as he watched from his door the retreating 'county lady,' and saw Davie Duncan ambling down the street towards the shop,—'come awa' in frae the cauld.' Davie was a half-witted creature who lived upon the public, making the round of the country, and faring not badly at the hands of the householders and farmers, who were always willing to give the 'puir cratur' a 'bit and a sup.' He was a body who could do a good turn or a bad, as the whim seized him; and Johnnie, for the sake of business, always gave him something—never much, it must be confessed. To-day, as the reader can believe, Johnnie was not a little put out with his two rather painful business failures, so he hastily placed a plate before Davie with something like a bare bone on it, which Davie instantly attacked, being extra hungry on this appetizing winter morning. Johnnie, whose morality seemed quickened by the morning's experience, though his temper was not improved, turned suddenly upon Davie, and said, 'You've forgotten yir grace, man, Davie!' Folding his hands and closing his eyes, Davie exclaimed in a loud tone, 'Lord bless the bane, an' pit mair meat upon't;' and as he afterwards explained, Johnnie never 'fasht him again about his grace.'

It was, then, out from this shop that Bruce saw the two boys emerge, hung all over with parcels of every imaginable size.

They stumped on till they were clear of the village, when one of them, disentangling himself from all his encumbrances, which he flung upon the ground, set off for a slide on a smooth bit of the road, which the village children had obligingly prepared.

'Come away, Frank,' Dick (for it was he) said—'come along, it's first rate!' Frank, who is but the echo of his elder and more adventurous brother, hastens to free himself of his bundles, and presently the boys are lost to all surroundings in their sport and fun.

Bruce hung about, convinced that in them he saw the object of his morning call, and feeling that he might introduce himself easily to them on the road.

When at last they tore themselves away, and went to gather up their parcels, a cry of terror burst from Frankie on finding a great rent in his biggest paper parcel, and seeing the flour—for which Miss Carruthers was waiting to bake the scones—breaking through.

'O Dick, Dick!' he cried, but could say no more; for as he attempted to lift the flour, it fell in heaps all about him, and the more he tried to save it, the faster it scattered its dusty shower.

'I say, man, hold hard,' Dick shouted, dashing to the rescue; but his eager little hands did not mend matters, and soon the entire contents of the deceitful brown paper bag were cleared out.

The scene was grotesque: Dick with the last fragment of the bag clenched in his hand, and Frankie whitened all over with flour! Something like despair was in Frank's brown eyes, and an irresistible twinkle of fun in Dick's black ones, although he was keenly alive to the danger of the situation.

'O Dick, what *will* she say?' Frank at last groaned out.

No answer.

'I say, could we brush it off—some of it?' beginning to slap himself right and left.

'No good,' answered Dick gloomily.

'Is the tea all right?' he suddenly exclaimed, much in the tone that might have befitted a general inquiring after the right flank of his army. 'And the castor oil, and the herrings, and the eggs in the pitcher?'

Yes, these and a few other—trifles perhaps you, my reader, might call them, but they were all important to the boys—were

safe. But the flour! After a prolonged council of war on the subject, and many suggestions from poor Frankie, which were all, however, pronounced by Dick to be 'humbug,' it was decided that more flour they must get,—home without it they didn't dare to go,—so they must return to Johnnie Cramm's, lay the case before him, and hope for his help in their plight. Frank acquiesced in this 'good plan,' and back they trudged.

'Weel, young maisters,' said Johnnie, coming forward simperingly as they entered, 'ye'll hae forgot something. What can I serve ye tae?'

'We've spilt all the flour,' said Dick, exhibiting the last shred of the brown paper bag between his finger and thumb, 'and we've come back to ask you to help us.'

'With the greatest of plissur,' answered Johnnie. 'I'll mak' up anither grand parcel in the twinkle of an eye,' and he bustled away to the flour barrel.

'But,' called Dick after him, 'it's not to go down here,' pulling a pass-book out of his pocket.

'What's yir wull?' with a look and gesture of anxiety, not to say suspicion, as he re-appeared behind the counter.

'It's not to go down here, Mr. Cramm,' very earnestly.

'What for no?' taking it from Dick.

'Oh! because— Stop a minute, Mr. Cramm,' seizing the pass-book and thrusting it into his pocket. 'No—no'—

'Dear keep me, but I maun. Miss Cruthers thraipit that intil me the first day she cam' here; everything, she says, is to go, says she, in *there*,' nodding in the direction of Dick's pocket, '*everything*.'

A momentary silence fell upon all.

'What's come ower the flour?' Johnnie asked at last.

Dick briefly explained.

'Could ye no' mak' oot that it was a dog flew at it, or somebody pushed ye, or'—

'Tell a lie, do you mean?' interrupted Dick, flushing scarlet. 'No, Mr. Cramm, I could not do *that*,' with a proud shake of his head. 'I'd rather go without my tea to-night, all the nights,

than do *that.* But,' pulling out his knife, one of his very few treasures, and giving an affectionate glance at it, he said, 'would you take this, and give us a bag of flour? Kate,' aside to Frank, 'once gave her little locket to a man and got a lot of money for it when—when father was'— The end of the sentence was whispered into Frankie's ear. 'Will you, Mr. Cramm?' placing the knife into Johnnie's hands.

Whether or not Mr. Cramm would have come to any bargain with Dick remains unknown, for at this moment Bruce entered the shop. Johnnie, who was examining the blade, laid it down, and made a profound bow, asking in his most obsequious manner how he could serve Mr. Bruce to-day.

Bruce gave one or two orders, and then turning to the depressed and still flour-besprinkled little fellows, said kindly, 'You've had an accident?'

Frank nodded.

'Will it signify much?' not at all grasping the danger of the situation.

'She'll be most awful angry,' answered Frank, catching hope from the inquiry.

'Who?'

'Miss Cruthers.'

In a moment the vision of this dread personage, as set forth by Gerty, stood before his mind's eye. The whole case was revealed, and, taking out his purse, Bruce said to the subservient Johnnie, 'Another parcel of flour, please.'

In the twinkling of an eye a parcel, the *facsimile* of that which had caused so much distress, was handed to Dick, who, as he embraced it in his arms, turned to Bruce and thanked him as only a very grateful but manly little gentleman could have done.

'I was just coming to call,' exclaimed Bruce as he left the shop with the boys. 'Couldn't I help you two to carry some of your big parcels? What have you got?' looking at Frankie, who, having given up his new big parcel to Dick's safer custody, had taken Dick's instead.

'It's a sheep's head.'

'Isn't it heavy?'

'Oh, middling!'

'Let me carry it for you.'

'Thank you,' said Frankie as he resigned the sheep's head without a sigh into Bruce's careful hands.

'You are the sons, are you not, of Major Murrie?' Bruce said presently as they trudged along. 'Pray who do you think I am?'

'The minister,' answered Dick promptly.

'The minister'—

But before Bruce could finish his sentence, Dick went on, 'Yes, sir; Miss Cruthers has been expecting you to call.'

'What makes you think I'm the'—

'You're so awful good and kind,' said Dick, walking along complacently by the side of his new friend with a light step and a still lighter heart.

'Is this a holiday?' asked Bruce. 'Have you had no lessons to-day?'

'Oh, a few, sir! but Miss Carruthers wanted flour.'

'But why not send a servant?'

'Grizel! Oh, *she* hasn't time!' Dick answered simply.

'But the groom or the coachman or—any one, rather than that you should miss your lessons.'

'Oh, we don't mind that!' said Dick, with a twinkle in his eye. 'We'd go messages every day rather than have lessons; but we hate eggs,—they break with the least thing,—and flour,' with a rather dismal look.

'Do you like sheep's head?' continued Bruce after a pause, greatly amused with his new little friends.

'I do,' said Dick promptly, 'but some of them don't; but *I* think the trotters is the best part.'

'Of the head,' added Bruce, laughing.

'Yes, by far; we have it always on Sundays when—when father's—not in.'

'He doesn't fancy it?'

'No, but—he—he's not often in—now.'

There was something of the 'shut up' in Dick's tone when talking of his father, and Bruce changed the subject.

'Who teaches you and your brother?'

'Oh, Katie! she's my sister, you know,—she teaches us all.'

'How many are there of you?'

'There's Hugh in England, and Katie and me and Frank, and the two twins, and Charlie and Ned; and there's Gussy and Flo' from India, but they're *quite* small.'

'But your sister doesn't surely teach the whole lot of you?'

'Oh yes! but Miss Carruthers takes the little ones when Katie's too busy'—

'Can you ride?'

With a look which said, 'I should think so, rather,' Dick proceeded to explain, however, that they hadn't very much of anything to ride upon, as Puck had only one eye, and was lame in his right leg, besides which he had a little carting of coals to do and fetching of wood, with an occasional journey to Kilbarton for what couldn't be got in Johnnie Cramm's.

By and by the trio reached Garnlee. Dick, who knew that they were a good hour late, marched, however, boldly into the house, followed timidly by Frankie and wonderingly by Bruce.

They were confronted at the door by Miss Carruthers, looking dark and angry; but when Dick stepped up to her and in a stage whisper said, 'This is the minister come to call,' every trace of displeasure in her hard features died away, and she came forward with a smile to welcome the visitor.

'Come away, sir,' she exclaimed, 'ye're hearty welcome; ye've been lang o' comin' atweel, but ye've been away for yer health. I hope ye're improved, sir; but ye *have* a thin look. Come away off the door, sir, an' into the fire,' bustling him towards a chair, and stirring the minute fire into an imaginary blaze.

'I beg your pardon, but I'm'—

'No' dressed as ye sud be. Mak' nae apology for that, sir—

never ye mind that. I think it's a clean disgrace that the minister sud aye hae on shoots o' guid blacks ilka day as well as Sabbath day; it's fair ruination.'

'I was going to explain, if you would allow me, that I'm'—

'Dinna fash, sir, wi' explanitudes; sit ye doun an' rest ye.'

As she spoke, Miss Carruthers pushed him into the arm-chair.

It was hopeless to make clear his identity, for amid the torrent of Miss Carruthers' words his reiterated feeble attempts were swept away.

Miss Carruthers' respect for 'ministers' was great. To belong to the cloth was in itself a sure passport to her favour, and to be associated with them in any parish work was the goal of her ambition. The frequent change of residence on the part of the Murrie family was a serious drawback to much intimacy between them and any minister who happened to be placed over them. This, however, did not affect her enthusiasm for them, nor her undisguised satisfaction when any one of their number honoured her with 'a call.' They furnished, besides, the almost solitary chance she had for pouring out her troubles into human ears, and extracting some few drops of sympathy. Her loyalty to her beloved mistress's family and affairs kept her lips sealed to all outsiders, but 'the minister' was a fit and proper receptacle for the heavy secret which burdened her honest heart.

'I brought you a few grapes,' Bruce at last managed to stammer, relinquishing the hope of explaining himself, and taking the cover off a neat basket, which, along with the sheep's head, he had managed to carry safe.

'Eh, sir, grapes!' exclaimed the delighted Carruthers; 'that *is* a present forbye yer call! It's maist uncommon kind an' mindfu' of ye, sir.'

'You must have a busy time with such a number,—with all these—these children,' glancing round the room, where, however, no vestige of a child was to be seen!

'Oh, sir! it *is* a handfu', as you've remarkit,—a *heavy* handfu',—but I was with their ma' when the eldest—that's Hugh, he's in a regiment—was born, an' they're a' jist like my ain bairns.'

'And Major Murrie?'

'O sir! *he's* a heart-break. If it wasna tae the minister, I would be dumb, but it's a clear duty to tell yer minister, and it's most fearsome. We never know when he's to be straight an' when he's to be aff the rails.'

Bruce fidgetted uneasily, but his attempts to speak were hopeless.

'When he's to come hame sober or when he'll come reelin' in. He *has* sober fits, though, nows and thens,—oh, 'deed yes!—but the touts is aye worser after the sober fits when once he's set off again. We cam' here for quiet, an' because there was less temptation an' fewer publicks aboot. He had been keepin' richt, an' Miss Murrie an' me was that happy; but t'other nicht he was at the Fort, an' what wi' wines and lickoures, he got the taste again, an' has been desperate bad. The puir bairns is clean frightened oot o' their bits o' wits; an' what to do Miss Murrie an' me does *not* know.'

'You really must positively allow me to explain,' exclaimed Bruce almost desperately, feeling that in spite of himself he was getting confidence under altogether false colours; but Miss Carruthers burst in with, 'An' aboot the boys' edication, sir, us women folk canna *go on* with that, an' yet we can nither send them to a boarding schule nor hire in a man for to teach them. We've teached them English an' grammar, an' the Catechism, together wi' jography an' sums; but as for Latin an' them ither dead languages—I only wish they were dead an' buried too—they fair beat us.'

'But why cannot their father—Major Murrie—send his sons like other boys to school?'

'Hasna the money, sir—we're gettin' puirer an' puirer; an' the law gentleman told Miss Murrie when we cam' here

that unless her father pulled himself up, an' lived more economicly, we wad find oursel's a' landed some day i' the puirshouse. He spends his pinchon mostly on drink an' cigars, an' I can tell ye it's hard lines on the hoose.'

Bruce seized his opportunity about the boys, enlarging on his love for these same dead languages, and what an interest it would be if Miss Carruthers would allow him in his abundant leisure to come now and then and give the boys a lesson; and at the close of an earnest talk on the subject, found himself, to his exceeding satisfaction and delight, in possession of the redoubtable Miss Carruthers' permission to come now and again and give 'the boys a whin Latin an' Greek.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship of hearts
To keep and cultivate,
And a work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom I wait.

'So I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with cheerful smiles,
And to wipe the tearful eyes;
And a heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.'

'BUT, Gerty,' said Bruce, to whom he went straight and communicated the result of his curious visit, 'all the time she thinks I'm the minister.'

'Never mind what she thinks,' Gerty replied, 'you can't help it; it's her own fault for not hearing you out. If you keep on with the grapes and things till you're fairly installed, she'll be only too glad to have you, minister or no—you'll do the boys such good!'

One other anxiety remained, how would Major Murrie relish the plan? Careless about his children,—with the exception of Kate, to whom he was ardently attached,—he went his own selfish ways as long as he conveniently could. But he was proud as well as poor, always talked largely, and sometimes played the wealthy man, and would sacrifice to an occasional entertainment the comfort of his poor children for many subsequent days.

This little cloud of uncertainty, however, passed away, thanks to the straightforwardness of Bruce, who, in conversation with Major Murrie, told him of his interest in his 'splendid boys,' and of the pleasure it would be to him, in his monotonous country life, to rub up his Latin and Greek with them.

Major Murrie acquiesced in the proposal. He liked the intimacy with Bruce, who belonged to one of the first families in the county; and not troubling himself to ascertain the amount of regular instruction his children received, contented himself with believing that the whole thing put a little life into the rather dull existence of a very dull young man.

Bruce drew out a regular plan of study, and set to work with his young friends with energy and heart. Twice a week he 'held his klesses,' as Miss Carruthers called it, at Garnlee.

He was a thoroughly well-educated and well-read man, and this stimulus to benefit others quickened his rather indolent powers.

> 'The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain
> Upon the earth beneath.
> It is twice bless'd:
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.'

A course of history and geography was begun with Dick and Frankie, the second hour being devoted to the younger boys, Charlie and Ned, while occasionally Gussy, who with his little sister Flo remained Kate's peculiar charge, was invited to have a lesson too.

By degrees Bruce lost his nervousness, and the stammer, which in ordinary conversation was so painful, passed greatly off as he threw himself into the work of reading or explaining.

He brought his maps and globes, and by their means took the boys many journeys and voyages, linking on their lessons in history with the places at which they touched, and creating, by his own interesting and at the same time thorough style of teaching, a perfect thirst for knowledge even in Dick's unstudious and pleasure-loving disposition.

He induced habits of study, and as rewards invited them to the Hall on Saturdays, where riding, skating, or scouring the beautiful grounds as the spring advanced for botanical specimens, formed endless sources of enjoyment. There, too, they met other boys from the neighbouring houses, and formed some pleasant and life-long friendships among them.

Lady Morell was charmed with the unconventional but innately well-bred young Murries. It was an endless subject of interest to her to study their faces, and find out resemblances among them to their mother, of whom she told them many delightful stories; while for Kate, the pale, feminine, marvellously self-controlled girl, she imbibed a great affection.

Meanwhile Gerty took up her own share of the work. For reasons which the reader can understand, she at first was not in such favour with Miss Carruthers as Bruce. Miss Carruthers associated her and her luxurious table with the first serious defalcation of Major Murrie in Lonshire. This, however, wore off when she found how innocent Gertrude personally was of the temptation which had been—and ever would be, she felt sure—put before Major Murrie when at the Fort, in the shape of fine wines; when, too, Gerty's genuine love for Kate, and interest in the family, took form in the many pleasant things she devised for their good, and the substantial benefits she conferred.

Gertrude invited Kate to come and read with her at certain set and regularly kept times. 'It is just what I have been longing for,' she said to her when they were arranging their plans, 'some one to go on with things.'

Fortunately for both of them, Kate had one or two recommendations in Colonel Ellerslie's eyes. She was quiet and lady-like, and being always on the outlook for hints to help on things at home, became a genuine and declared admirer of his *ménage* and of the many novelties that were ever appearing at table. She was also a good chess player; and when Aunt Dorothy was indisposed for a beating—her almost invariable fate—Kate would gladly take her place, and play

her part to the Colonel's entire satisfaction, being a sufficiently good player to be worth beating, and yet so amiable as not to be ruffled by the many defeats she sustained!

Gerty, who had no taste for games, and a distinct aversion to being beaten, very thankfully yielded her place to her friend.

Now and then little golden-haired Flo accompanied Aunt Kate to the Fort, and became an endless source of pleasure to Gerty, while neither the twins nor the boys were overlooked. The intimacy thus formed grew and strengthened.

CHAPTER XIX.

'As when the soft spring shower
Falls on the thirsty ground,
Its fertilizing power
In every leaf is found.

'So, Fount of Life eternal,
Thy gentle dews distil,
Till parchèd hearts are softened
Beneath Thy sovereign will;

'Till every thought and feeling,
Renewed with life divine,
Buds forth, sweet fruit revealing,
And owns the glory Thine.'

IF the intimacy between Kate and Gertrude grew slowly, perhaps, it was all the more sure.

The entire absence of anything like patronage on Gertrude's part towards the peculiarly situated and proud-spirited girl, and her generosity—not to speak of her personal and intellectual attractions—drew Kate's heart towards her; while Kate's independence of character, in spite of her poverty and seclusion, had a peculiar charm for Gertrude.

This independence, strong in the intellectual and thinking part of Kate's being, moulded her words and actions; yet a marked reticence in giving expression to her thoughts on any subject, except the most commonplace, threw a veil almost of mystery around her,—a veil which few ever managed to lift, or,

as Kate in the bitterness of her heart came to discover, ever cared to raise.

She had an all-over settled look of sadness, deepening often into one of despair, sometimes into one of defiance. She relaxed a little when with Gertrude; any such relaxation, however, giving place, as soon as she returned home, to the usual predominant sadness, and when again she and Gertrude met, the old stony look was on her face.

She became profoundly interested in the study of German with her young preceptress, but for music she declared her aversion, and could never be brought to express admiration for the works of nature. 'She is a flower that has been trampled upon,' thought Gertrude, when puzzling over this girl's character; 'will she ever regain her lost elasticity?' That she had sorrows and trials of no ordinary kind, Gertrude knew, but her persistent gloominess of heart was unnatural in one so young. Gertrude hoped to help to lift her out of it. She laid no plans,—she 'hated plans,'—but in accordance with the instincts of her 'aefauld' and generous nature, she let out her frank, kind heart naturally towards her, nor did she forget to remember her daily where it is best worth being remembered. She did not attempt to draw out Kate's confidences; but by the way she endeared herself to the lonesome creature, she unconsciously melted the frozen barrier of reserve round the poor heart, and drew at last, from its hiding-place, the secret of her gloom.

It was a pleasant afternoon in the early spring, and Kate had walked over to the Fort for her usual reading. As the two friends finished their study, Gertrude exclaimed, as she laid aside their books and drew Kate to the window, 'Oh, how beautiful and hopeful everything looks to-day! My very heart rises to Him who gives us the springtime of the year. I want so to talk about Him! I have so often wanted, Kate!' She looked eagerly at her companion, expecting a response, which, however, did not come.

'It is quite lately that I have begun to think of Christ as

the Creator of everything. I used to think it was God the Father; but if you read the Bible carefully, you find it is Christ who did it all,—He who died to save us, Kate,' putting her arm round the slender waist,—'He created everything, everybody, you and me!'

Gertrude's heightened colour alone showed the effort it was costing her to say all this.

'I wish, oh, how I wish He had never created *me!*' came at last through Kate's half-clenched teeth.

Gertrude started.

'It seems too bad,' Kate went on, 'that whether we will or not, we must—be. If people could be asked'—a weird sort of smile passing over her face as she felt the 'queerness' of her supposition—'if people could only be asked before they existed, whether they would be or not, and had only a glimmer of the wretchedness of this life, it would be a thinly peopled world!'

'I don't believe it,' answered Gertrude bluntly; 'mere curiosity, not to speak of the hope which is in every heart, would make everybody wish to be.'

'Perhaps,' glancing from Gertrude round the *recherché* little room, with its perfect furnishings, its snowy curtains swaying in the soft breeze which came in at the open window, its flowers and books, and then back to Gertrude herself in her beauty, and cleverness, and luxury,—'perhaps, yes. Yes, I can believe, in your case, life may be endur— bright and happy. But in most cases, at least most that I know,—*mine*, most certainly,—no life would have been a blessing, while life, my life, is a simple curse!'

'Kate, are you so unhappy? You haven't at any rate always been. You have some little happy spots to look back upon. And oh, how much to hope for!'

'Most women have happy childhood, or girlhood, or something happy in their lots. *I* can remember no such moments; and to look forward, oh!' with a shrill laugh, 'if only we had the end of everything at last! but no! our

irrevocable fate is never to be done with this woful being, or rather to enter into something a great deal worse. I saw in a paper the other day, that the Japanese are such an unhappy people, that when some good men told them about eternal life, they wouldn't listen to anything more they had to say, because they said it was too terrible to think of, far less to wish for, and the mission-men were consulting whether they couldn't change their tactics.'—

'But these good men want to tell them about God's love, and then'—

'Love!' interrupted Kate with a wild laugh. 'You mustn't talk to me of that. I know nothing of that—nothing. My life, my fate, has none of that element in it.'

'Kate,' said Gertrude, seating her friend, and trying to compose herself to listen to an outburst which she saw was coming, 'you have been reading some of these hurtful books you will pore over, and they have put all sorts of notions into your poor little head.'

'I need no books to put any such notions into me, Miss Ellerslie; my miserable heart speaks for itself. If God really, as you and such as you hold, shapes our lives,—if He arranges, determines our lots, He must have a deep hatred at me surely. Listen,' with kindling excitement, which lighted up her usually lustreless eyes and sent the hot blood mantling to her cheeks. 'My childhood, spent among natives in India, who, when mother was ill, tossed me about like a shuttlecock, or left me to die in the broiling sun; oh that I had!—When old enough to take in the state of matters, I discover that father is delicate, has very little money but his pay and some trifle of mother's to feed and clothe and bring up eleven! Two babies die, fortunately, but nine are left. I love my parents passionately, but mother, O mother! mother dear! after months of dreadful suffering, dies, and is laid in the hateful grave in Ireland, too, where the regiment then was. Our eldest sister,—I'm the second girl,—our beauty, marries an officer in our regiment; goes to India. I was to go to her when old enough, but she dies too!'—

with a hysterical laugh,—'and *her* two poor little things are sent home to us, Gussy and Flo. Yes, and we have little to live upon ourselves; so Captain Brooks sends father something for them, or rather Carruthers gets it. Mother's relations pay our rent and give us something for clothes, and Carruthers says if we hadn't that, we must all go to the poorhouse!'

'Surely not! your father must have something left or saved?'

'But he was once just going to be put in prison,' said Kate, clasping her hands, 'and the people said if he would sign a paper he wouldn't have to go, and he did; but he told me it was to say that he gave up nearly all he had to these cruel men.'

'Cruel man himself!' exclaimed Gertrude in the impulse of the moment, for she knew enough of Major Murrie to feel that he was the fruitful source of all the misery of his family.

In a moment Kate's face changed, and drawing herself up, she said hurriedly, but with the air of a queen, 'My father, Miss Ellerslie, cruel! Please never speak so of the one idol of my heart. He has been the victim of a hard Providence; and whatever you may hear of him, he is the noblest man living.'

'O Kate, don't be so grandiloquently absurd!' said Gertrude, her outspoken sincerity getting the better of her patience at such infatuated blindness on Kate's part. 'I wouldn't tell lies to screen *my* father, if he drank and dragged *us* down, I can tell you.'

'Who ever *dared* to say my father dr—an'—

'Who doesn't know it?' interrupted Gertrude, who longed to deliver Kate out of a wilful blindness that made her sacrifice everything to screen this man. 'We may hold our tongues about those who offend, but to deceive, or try to deceive ourselves about them, is no true kindness; we do nothing then to try and save them. I firmly believe that if you acted more decidedly with yo—u—r—with Major Murrie, you might help him; but screening him as you do, and not letting him feel the selfishness of his conduct, and the degradation to which he is dragging you all, he goes calmly on in his ruinous ways.'

'Who told you that h—e'—

'Told me? why, everybody knows it. He can't go anywhere, to dinner or anywhere, but he—h—e—well—Kate, it is hard to talk so, but I do so want to help you.'

'He is so clever and handsome, a—nd wh—en he i—s himself,' said poor Kate.

'"Handsome is that handsome does," as our good Simmonds says,' interrupted Gerty; 'you must pray and try to help your father to get over his wretched habit.'

'Pray!' scoffingly.

'Yes, pray. God will help you and him, if you ask Him.'

'But who,'—unconsciously dropping the screen she was ever holding between her father and his sin,—'who gives such appetites and cravings, who?'

'Not God,' decidedly.

'Who did you say just now created us, began at the beginning of us?'

Gertrude was startled.

'Here we are,' continued Kate, 'launched *nolens volens* into this beautiful, *you* say, *I* call it bleak, briery world. We awaken with desires, thirstings. In this same beautiful world,' with growing irony in her tone, 'are the means of supplying these natural desires. We put out our hand and obey the instincts of our being, lo! we are pulled up, called sinful, degraded, told we are preparing ourselves for eternal misery,—it is bad enough here and now, I am sure,—and that unless we give up everything we like, and become canting hypocrites, it will be tenfold worse with us hereafter.'

Kate had heard her father and a few choice spirits rhyme over these theories till she had imbibed them all, till they were now part of her very being.

'I never heard such things before,' said Gerty. 'I must think over them before I can speak back. But I have come to know that I am a sinner, and—as—so'—

'Where did you get your sin?'

Gertrude was silent.

'You would rather not have had it, I presume,' Kate went on, the sluice-gates of the poisoned waters of her heart being now unlocked. 'You would have preferred being without what all the ministers say is the source of all our sorrows and miseries. Where did *it* come from?'

'I know not,' said Gertrude musingly. 'I have not thought about that either.'

'There it is!' exclaimed Kate exultingly. 'Some minds take everything for granted; others, deep, thoughtful spirits, must know the why and wherefore of things before *they* can be taken in with old wives' twaddle.'

Gertrude was silent with astonishment. Was this sharp, bitter creature really the same impassive, meek girl she had hitherto considered Kate to be? 'Well, at any rate,' she at last said, 'it is plain enough to our own consciousness that we are sinners;' and very earnestly, 'O Kate, there is a real Saviour at hand, and He will help us to be different. Just this morning I was reading a book written by a great man whose words I like, not only because he is so intellectual and good, but because all through there are such loving touches of humanity, of weakness and proneness to temptation, and all that. Well, in the place I was reading, Dr. Chalmers, after remarking on our sins, says: "The sinner is like a man in a boat on the waters of Niagara. He is drifting towards the Falls, where certain death awaits him; but a strong arm appears to drag him back. If he yields to it, he is saved; if he fling it off, he goes down to destruction."'

Kate sat silent for a few seconds, and then exclaimed, 'But if this man inherits insanity, which makes him think that it would be rather pleasant than otherwise to be dashed over the Falls, is he guilty? Is he to be judged and condemned as a sane man would be, because he obeyed his instincts, his inherited instincts? I see no justice in a judge who could condemn such a poor victim of fate; surely love has no place in his heart!'

Gertrude relapsed into silence, then suddenly exclaimed, 'O Kate, I hope you are all wrong! No wonder you are sad and weary if you think all this. Before I knew anything about these things, I mean with my heart, I was weary and tired too, not with your sort of tiredness, but just of all the pottering sort of life one had to go on leading.'

'Well?' said Kate.

'At first I was determined to excel in music and languages, and worked hard at them. People admired my execution, and I had great enjoyment in the study of my favourite arts and sciences. But I thought there was more to come, and fancied I would be in a sort of elysium when I was old enough to go to balls and dances. For several seasons I 'assisted' at them, as the French say, but I soon lost heart with them too. The whole thing seemed so shallow and heartless, we girls trying to outshine one another, and the men meaning nothing by the grandest, tenderest speeches. I used to get on Ruby's back, and ride into the loneliest places just to get away from the whole thing. It was the only resource I had. I went back to the arts and sciences, but somehow they did not satisfy me.'

'If I had had your life,' said Kate, 'I don't think I would have come out of it in despair. *My* recreations are stocking-darning and frock and hat-mending. If it wasn't for Sunday, I would never get a book read, nor a stitch put in for myself; but I *insist* on having that day.'

'Does Carruthers keep you so hard at work?'

'No, no; but she slaves so herself for us all, good soul, that she shames me out of idleness.'

'Does she go in for—hold these dreadful thoughts about God,' in a hushed tone, 'and life—and everything?'

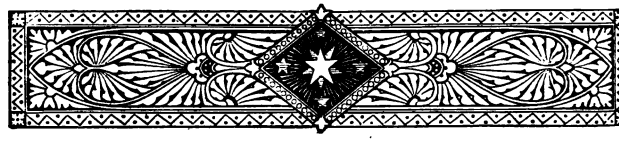
'We never speak about them now. She swears by ministers, —I don't believe in them either now,—and goes to church, and takes the children; but the bigger ones drop off as they grow up.'

'O Kate!'

'I'm no mere child or girl now, Miss Ellerslie. I'm eight-and-twenty, so I've experience to back up my theories, as you call them.'

'Kate!'

'Now I must go. I'm due at home; Carruthers needs me, poor thing, to help with the children's tea.'



CHAPTER XX.

'We are so tired, my heart and me.'

GERTRUDE, left alone, could think of nothing but of Kate and her theories and her misery. Clearly her 'views,' right or wrong, had a depressing and deteriorating effect upon her heart and life.

In what vivid contrast did she thus stand out with the chastened spirits and devoted lives of those who had allured her into the Christian life! Ah! but what about this Christianity? The poison dropped into her mind worked. Kate's openly expressed hard thoughts of God, and her defiant bitterness against her lot, which had so shocked Gertrude as she listened to them, seemed, as she brooded over them, capable of apology in one placed in such exceptionally painful circumstances. Why should she have such a blighted, wretched existence? Why, for that part, as she mused on, should there be such crosses in almost every home? Her mind reverted to the neighbouring families, her familiar friends, every one of whom, however externally bright their lots might seem, had, she knew, a skeleton hid away in some corner or other! Why, as she withdrew her mental eye from others and fixed it on her own lot, was her mother taken from her when she needed her, craved for her with her hungry heart? why was every one that she specially loved away from her—Fred, Rose, those too who could have helped her in her soul's concerns—Cousin Helen, Captain Egerton, spirited away just when she so sorely needed them?

And was it not a simple aggravation of all this to have the irritation of Aunt Dorothy's company, and the cold, unsympathizing society of her self-contained father? Yes; wrong as it was of Kate to have spoken so irreverently, there was a vein of truth in all she had said. Gertrude began to feel this, by and by to sympathize in it.

The poisoned current of her thoughts flowed on, and the opposition with which she had at first met Kate's unbelief wore off. 'She is so clever,' she mused on, 'has made the whole thing the subject of such careful study; what an absurd simpleton she must take me for, never to have even thought of her side of the question!'

Think now poor Gertrude did, and of nothing else, and somehow the more she thought, the more her faith seemed to give way, till, when a few days afterwards Kate re-appeared for their German reading, she felt as if the ground of her peace and hope was fast crumbling beneath her.

'I couldn't get up last Thursday, Miss Ellerslie,' said Kate in her most ironical tone. 'Some fresh flowers cropped up in my path, and I had, of course, to gather and enjoy them! But how pale and tired you look! are you ill?'

'Indeed I am not well,' said Gertrude, turning her clear, truth-speaking eyes full upon her friend. 'I have been very unhappy all the week since you were here, Kate.'

'My evil star rising over your fair head, eh? But sooner or later misery comes; go where you will, do what you like, life is a sea of trial:

> "Men must work, and women must weep,
> *And* the sooner it's over, the sooner to *sleep*"

—eh? I hope so.'

'But,' said poor Gertrude, 'Kingsley, who wrote these lines, had a very happy life. Don't you think people write sometimes in a sentimental sort of style, not meaning always what they say? I remember, as a child, writing lines about the most dolorous things: blighted hopes, and broken hearts,

and death, and the grave, and I knew nothing about them, nor felt a scrap melancholy over them all!'

'The author of *Yeast* knew well about them.'

'I don't think people should write melancholy, *imaginary* things.'

'There's enough of them without imagining, certainly.'

'Yes, if people would write true things in a true way, to cheer and help.'

'But they can't. The imaginary people may—those who write books to order on certain subjects, pill-gilders—trump up lovely tales, but if they don't tell about the woes of life, they're a delusion and a snare!'

'I've been so wretched thinking over what you said,' said Gerty, coming back to herself.

'I don't wonder,' coldly.

'A—nd—I think it's holding these views that makes you s—o so miserable.'

'What views?'

'About God and His love,' with a tremor in her voice and a moisture in her eye.

'They're not *views*, Miss Ellerslie, they're facts, and they're intended to make us wretched.'

'O Kate, God does *not intend* to make us unhappy! He has given His own dear Son to lift us out of our sin and misery; for God so *loved* the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should *not* perish, but have everlasting life. The happiness which these words have given me, wh—en I believed them, and rested myself in this great love of God and Christ, is equalled only by the distress which the suspicion of its reality has caused me!'

'Where do you find these words?'

'In the Bible, in St. John's Gospel; do you not know them? I thought you told me you had studied the Bible, searched into its evidences, and come to the conclusion that i—t it was a—a—my'—

'A myth! Oh, so I have!'

'Not very profoundly surely, if you have missed such a glorious passage as that!'

'Oh, yes! but it's some time since I gave up reading it. You don't keep *studying* a book you don't believe in; only an idiot or a hypocrite would do that. Besides, doesn't the Bible say that people who believe in it are to be self-denying, forgiving, kind, generous, and so forth—models of love an—d goodness? Where do you find any such paragons?' with kindling eyes, and in a tone of bitterness. 'Your Christians, forsooth! are as selfish, and censorious, and uncharitable, and harsh, more so often than those who fling such notions to the winds, and exercise their own reason upon the things that *are*. Believe me, Miss Ellerslie, there's no such thing as a heart of love moving the wheels of this wretched life; and if there's something worse even than this meeting us at the other side, I end where I began, and say it's a cruel, unjust shame to make a poor wretch live, whether he will or not, in a dark, howling wilderness, and to punish him at the end of that with something worse than death, for what? for obeying the natural instincts of his being which were born with him. *I* do not believe in the Bible, or the Bible's God.' And Kate went away, leaving upon Gertrude's heart a deeper sense of defeat even than the week before, and a felt helplessness to meet the terrible unbelief with which Kate's being seemed saturated, or to rid herself of its unwelcome influence.

Gertrude had promised to spend an hour this afternoon with Lady Morell, who was very dependent on her society, and presently she started on her walk to the Hall.

What a change during the past week had come over everything! The sunshine and the skies, and the flowers and the birds, in which she had been revelling as His workmanship, seemed less beautiful. Ah! it was the mist round her own heart that bedimmed them—that subtle, dreadful mist of doubt which had come up from the dark and dismal caverns of Kate's unbelieving heart, and had crept round hers.

Lady Morell was ailing, and soon poured out a list of grievances into Gerty's rather abstracted ear. The girls wrote grumblingly, Hilda's favourite mare was lamed, and Adelaide had lost heavily in some betting affair.

'They seldom speak of their husbands,' Lady Morell went on, 'and never as loving wives, if they do mention them; so different from their father and me. I never was happy if he was from home; there was no one to tell all about the rows in the servants' hall, and to consult with about wages and things.'

Gertrude could not help thinking Sir John would often go from home.

'And then, when I had those headaches, I liked him beside me, though he always would insist that to be quiet and alone was the best thing for me. But the girls never were domestic, and, poor things, you can't help people's natures; as we are born, there we are!'

Gertrude's wandering thoughts rallied at the words.

'You can no more change your natural disposition than you can change the colour of your skin, my dear; and it is a weary world after all. I have always felt that I never could do enough to make it as happy as possible for my children, having been the means of them coming into it whether they would or not.'

Gertrude started. How strange it is, that, in particular circumstances or moods, we seem to come into contact with persons in the same case as ourselves! Break your leg, for instance, and you will be surprised to discover, not that this and the other whom you meet have broken theirs, but that sound limbs are quite the exception!

'How curious!' Gertrude unconsciously exclaimed.

'So it is, my dear,' not at all taking up the thread of Gerty's thoughts; 'but when you have lived as long as I have, you will find there are many queer things in the world that are most puzzling.'

'So I begin to think,' said poor Gerty, who was feeling as if the solid earth beneath her feet was giving way.

'But don't you read and worrit your mind so much, my

dear. You've been looking very white of late; take things easy, and enjoy life as long as you can!'

'Eat, drink, and be merry, in short, for to-morrow—ah!' thought Gertrude as she bade Lady Morell good-bye, 'we may die; and if there is n—o Saviour, O God! O Christ!' she cried in her heart, 'help me, I am drifting, sinking!'

The Hall was about a quarter of an hour's walk from Hilton, and on the farther side of the village were Mr. Stewart's church and manse. He had but recently been appointed to the charge, but Gertrude had imbibed the highest admiration for his talents and earnestness. She greatly liked him and his wife, and felt thankful for their coming. Something within prompted her to call and tell Mrs. Stewart her new-born but most painful doubts. She walked hurriedly towards Hilton. It was—to her, impulsive and fearless as she was—a bold step. What would she think of her? Be shocked, doubtless, and consider her a hopeless case! Well, but she must, for her own sake, in whom the poison was working fast, as well as for Kate's also, get help.

'Mrs. Stewart is from home,' the servant replied to Gertrude, as with a beating heart she stood at the manse door.

'Oh, I'm so very sorry!' with a blank look.

'But Mr. Stewart is in, mem.'

'Oh, I couldn't disturb *him*,' decidedly.

'He's used to *that*, mem.'

'But no, no, I couldn't really; when will Mrs. Stewart be back?'

'She's away seein' her sister-in-law, who's ill, and we don't know when she'll get home, mem.'

'Oh dear!' dejectedly.

'But if ye would just step into the drawndrum, I'll tell Mr. Stewart,' and she opened the door wide.

'No, I really cannot!'

'Who will I say was callin', mem?'

'Oh, nobody!' turning away.

At the garden-gate she met little Norman and Maggie, the younger children of the manse, and stopped to speak to them.

'Mamma's away, Maggie!'

'Yes, but Papa's in. I know by the study window; it's always up when he's out.'

'But he's busy.'

'Oh, but he'll be done now; for he said if we came home soon, he would come and work in our gardens with us for a whole half-hour,' with sparkling eyes. 'And we want to know how to weed the beds and not pull up the flowers.'

'Ah, that's just what I want to learn about something else!' exclaimed Gerty.

'Well, stay, and Papa will show you.'

'Oh no, dearie! he wouldn't care about me staying.'

'But he would!' exclaimed Maggie; and darting off, she flew to the study window, and tapping lightly but fearlessly against the pane, brought up the minister from his books at once.

'Papa, here's Miss Ellsy, the pretty lady that gave me and Norman the box of chocolate drops. She wants to see you weeding our gardens; mayn't she?'

Mr. Stewart stepped out upon the grass, and taking his little girl by the hand, hastened towards Gertrude.

'I fear we, in our small way, can give you little help, Miss Ellerslie,' he said, smiling, as he shook her hand heartily, 'but'—

'O Mr. Stewart!' flushing deeply, 'it's not that sort of weeding I meant. It is weeds of doubt—a—nd—a—n—d—suspicion that have come into my mind, and I came to have a talk with Mrs. Stewart, but she is away, and y—ou—are'—

'Ready to talk to you if you wish it,' said the minister warmly.

'Oh, thank you. I do wish it; it's more than I ever thought of!'

'If you won't feel it cold, shall we sit here?' leading the way to a seat in front of the house.

'Thank you, but the children's weeding?'

'They can wait. Maggie, Norman, go and rake the walks in mamma's garden there,' pointing to some plots before them; 'you did your own so well yesterday that I can trust you to do these, and we'll weed a bit afterwards.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you!' exclaimed the children as they went off to rake, and Gertrude opened her mind to the pastor.

'I have been so happy,' she said,—'so happy in thinking of Christ as my Creator, and,' very earnestly, 'as my Saviour; everything has seemed so full of meaning and of stimulus, but now *I am shaken about it all.*'

'What exactly has shaken you?'

'A talk with a friend who doesn't believe in the Bible or God's love, and thinks it isn't love at all to have created us.'

'Is she, or he, perfectly sane?'

'Perfectly; but her life has been a very miserable one always, she says!'

'Has she ever *tried* to think of God as the Bible reveals Him?'

'I cannot tell. She doesn't read it, I fear; but she speaks, too, as if she believed part of it, as, for instance, the way she talks of our creation, of sin and the fall, and the terrible things about us.'

'Well, is she, is any one, at liberty to take up certain parts of any book, specially of a book professing to be, and bearing internal evidence of being, the Word of God, and to leave out portions at their will? What an outcry we should have against any one who thus treated a book of science!'

'So we should!'

'Assured, then, that by her own incidental confessions she believes in the Bible, or part of it, we must find out what it is in her that prejudices her against some portions of it.'

'She denies that God is the God of love, because, she says, no such Being would create us into such a wretched existence and world; hers is really a most miserable life.'

'Believe me, Miss Ellerslie, we have very much the making or marring of our lives here in our own hands. I have known,

I do know, some Christians whose earthly lot is mournful, and yet whose hearts are so gracious, that from dear love to their Lord they seek to follow Him fully; so that if this world is a desert, they are certainly oases in it. From what you say of this lady, of her irritation at her lot, I should be inclined to think that she is struggling against the convictions of conscience, or is in love with some sin, from which sooner than part, she will try to persuade herself of the injustice and cruelty of the holy God of love.'

'She doesn't seem to care about anything,' said Gertrude, whose inexperience prevented her following the pastor's line of argument.

'Besides, all that any creature may say, or try to persuade himself or others to believe, does not by a hair's breadth affect the being and character of God. If I choose to look at that brilliant sun,' glancing upwards, 'through a blackened glass, I lose its beauty, but it is the same untarnished, glorious orb.'

Oh yes!' with a smile of intelligence; 'but,' relapsing into her anxious look, 'ho—w can we be *sure* about the Bible, which tells us of God, Mr. Stewart? Wh—o—wrote it? So much depends upon it. I cannot help the dreadful thoughts that have been coming up into my mind, and that are making me so utterly wretched.'

'Let us look at your question, Who wrote the Bible? Clearly not man; he would not have spoken of himself as the Bible does. Certainly not Satan; else we should have had another version of himself and his doings. The conviction to which the earnest and unprejudiced mind is brought, is that the Bible is what it professes to be, the word of the living and true God.'

'Well, Mr. Stewart!' with kindling interest and hope.

'You will generally find that an atheist is ignorant of the Bible, and yet one of his stock arguments is that he has gone over all the question of Christian evidence, that he has studied and sifted the subject, and has found nothing in it. Read Leslie Stephen, or Morley, any of the advanced atheists of the day, and you will find them asserting this, and holding up to

ridicule the feeble and old-fashioned intellects, as they call them, of those who believe such fables! It is true, the atheist often knows more about the question than the easy-going Christian does, though it is false that, as a class, atheists have given more attention to such investigation than Christians.'

'I had nothing to meet Ka—my friend's arguments with,' said Gertrude sadly; 'they fell upon me as a thunder-clap, and stunned me, and my misery since has been terrible. And suspicion is a dreadful thing against one, too, you have been learning to know and love.'

'It is; yet this sort of doubt is against certain innate intuitions of our being, the instinct of a future life, for example, and the moral law; of the belief, too, in a Christ. Seek to destroy these innate ideas, and you plunge your victim into a state of wretchedness.'

'Yes, indeed,' heartily.

'But all such attempts to undermine the Christian faith have been ably met and answered by Christians. The field is in their hands, though the war is ever breaking out again; the new weapons of advancing science, entering the lists with the old weapons of the truth, will be worsted in the long run. And Christianity changes not, but, like its Divine Author, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; while infidelity is ever shifting its ground, and daily making concessions to us. The Bible bears marks all through of the perfect character of its Author, of His holy hatred of sin, but of His unquenchable love for the sinner.'

'But about sin, Mr. Stewart; Miss Murrie—my friend,' correcting her mistake in mentioning the caviller's name,—'my friend says we are not responsible for our sin, and that it is very unjust we should suffer here and hereafter for what we would much rather be without.'

'She has a remedy at hand if she would be rid of her sin; but such objectors are generally those who love their sins, and are determined to keep them, but who try to lift the blame from themselves and lay it at God's door!'

'But, Mr. Stewart, where did sin come from? My friend says from God, but that I am *sure* is wrong; yet how did a holy and loving God, with all power, not prevent it coming to us?'

'I cannot tell. It is one of God's at present locked-up mysteries.'

'Does that satisfy you?'

'Man came innocent from his Creator's hand, but although innocent, would he have considered himself a true man had his will been coerced into obedience—had he not rather been left to the freedom of his own will? In the exercise of that he yielded to temptation, and fell.'

'Lost his innocence, and happiness, and heaven!'

'The word of God says, "Without *holiness* no man shall see God!" Now, Miss Ellerslie, I do not know through what progressive stages innocent humanity would have had to pass to be made meet for heaven, but I do know this,—and I call upon you to fix your intelligent thought on this fact, and to catch up my meaning as I try to throw it out,—I do know that innocence does not furnish a sufficient title to heaven. Holiness alone does. Innocence is not having known or done evil; holiness is having the choice put between good and evil, and leaving the evil for the good. Do you feel that had you been in Adam's place, or Eve's, you would have abstained from the evil and cleaved to the good?'

'No—no—no,' earnestly.

'Well, leave all thought of any fancied righteousness of our own, and fasten your heart and mind on One who, as God, was holy, and who, as Man, was innocent, as He lay in His cradle, as He grew to boyhood and manhood, and who, by fulfilling the commandments of God, went from innocence to holiness. There was nothing to prevent Him, according to God's law, entering heaven; everything rather to give Him a right and title to it. Can you not see that whatever we lost in losing our innocence in Adam, we have more than made up to us by the innocence and holiness of Jesus Christ?'

'I see.'

'And while it is true that the evidences of Christianity are such as satisfy the candid inquirer, it is no less true that the heart's own experience of them is their best evidence to himself. When my hungry child comes clamorous to me for food, and I offer him bread, does he, before he will eat it, demand from me proof that it *is* bread? insist on knowing how its integral parts were put together, and whether or not it will satisfy him?'

'No—oh no!' said Gertrude, with a brightening look.

'He, in the trustfulness of his heart, believes my word that it is what it professes to be, and he proves this to his own consciousness by—eating it:

> 'Oh taste and see that God is good,
> Who trusts in Him is blessed.'

'I see! I see!' exclaimed Gertrude.

'You have a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, I presume?'

'Oh yes!'

'Read in it of the meeting of Christian and Hopeful with Atheist. There is nothing finer in the book than the account of the conversation which this gives rise to between the pilgrims; and the result of the sarcastic but shallow arguments of Atheist upon their minds, especially on that of young Hopeful, was to strike the roots of his faith deeper and stronger round the "Rock of Ages." It brought him to his knees, and brought the love and power of the Father to His child. Use the means, Miss Ellerslie, God has given to prove all things: If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. Be earnest in prayer; tell the Lord all you have told me,—all that is in your heart,—and see if, in answer to this unburdening of yourself to Him, He will not pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'

'I will indeed, Mr. Stewart,' said Gertrude as she rose to go; 'and do you think my—m—y—faith and peace will be as before?'

'"Oh that my people had hearkened to my commandments," says God, "then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!"'

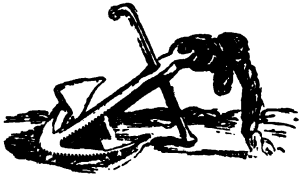
'Thank you—oh—so much!' said Gertrude, shaking hands with the pastor; 'how you have helped and lightened me!'

Gertrude walked homewards with a lightened heart. This scholarly, earnest man had not spurned her, as she had had a secret misgiving he would have done, when he heard her 'doubts,' and his line of argument was convincing; while the practical part to which he had led her, and by which her own experience was to test the validity of those things which were now dear to her heart, was within her reach. From the way he talked, she felt he must have passed through some such sifting process as she had experienced. Well, plainly he had weathered the storm with which the tempter had assailed him; his feet were firm on the Rock round which again she in her thankfulness felt herself clinging more trustfully than ever. Her heart rebounded in gratitude to Him who, by His providential guidance of her to-day, had led her to such a means of help.

The impression burned in upon her heart by Mr. Stewart's words was one of deeper reverential love to God for His great plan of redemption than any of which she had as yet been conscious; while the stirrings of mind to which they gave rise left with her the thankful conviction that the heart of God, with its warm, rescuing love, was infinitely more revealed to poor fallen man than ever it could have been towards him while innocent. 'This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.' This life was hers; the further knowledge was to be got in the appointed way.

At night, and when alone in her quiet room, she sought, in her Concordance, for the texts Mr. Stewart had quoted, and which, by their fitness to her case, had impressed her deeply. She turned up the passage, too, in the *Pilgrim's Progress* to which he referred, and it seemed to her that she was looking into a mirror where her own image was reflected. Hers was, then, no solitary case,—ah no! and as she read on, she found it recorded: There hath no temptation taken you but such as

is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 'He will—He has,' she murmured as she poured out her heart before the Lord.



CHAPTER XXI.

'And the lady prayed in heaviness
That looked not for relief;
But swiftly did her succour come,
And a patience to her grief.
Oh! there is never sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely end,
If but to God we turn, and ask
Of Him to be our friend.'

THE soft sunshine of the early part of this spring day gave place to a cold, squally afternoon, and Kate shivered as she walked home from the Fort. Everything was bleak within her and without. Her father had been from home longer than usual; he had not written, as he sometimes did, announcing his return, so that things generally might assume their best aspect; their money was dwindling away, and it would take some hard sewing and patching to turn out the children in anything like spring or summer costumes. Far on into the night, after the household was asleep, Kate sat with Carruthers at work, scarcely uttering a word, but with her stoniest, most defiant look upon her face.

'The wind is rising fiercely,' said Carruthers after a long silence; 'I fear it will blow off all our blossom.'

'Most likely.'

The branches of an apple tree outside beat against the window as if echoing the grim expectation.

'I had so set my heart on apple-dumplings for the twins' birthday!' said Carruthers.

'If you hadn't cared a straw whether there would be an

apple in the garden or not, we might have had a good crop,' said Kate. 'How bitterly cold it is!'

The room was dreary enough,—this long, low, schoolroom place,—fireless, and with only the light of the small lamp pulled close to the workers. The wind whistled through the casement, the rats played hide-and-seek in the wainscot, and the loud ticking of the hall-clock sounded eerily as it tolled out the midnight hour.

Suddenly Kate started. Her quick ear had caught, amid the storm, the sound of wheels, and presently a loud knocking, as if made with the end of a driving-whip, was heard at the hall-door. A meaning look passed between Kate and Carruthers, and seizing the lamp, Kate hurried to the door.

'Open, Miss Murrie,' said the voice of Dr. Wright outside. 'We've brought home your'— but before his sentence was ended, the door was flung open, and Kate stepped out, giving Carruthers the lamp. Major Murrie was helped out of the dog-cart, and shambled up the steps. He had an idiotic smile on his face, and spoke inarticulately.

'Get him to bed,' Dr. Wright said to Carruthers.

At last this was done with no little amount of scuffling, and after sundry interruptions on the Major's part, as when he yelled out one instant, 'Murder!' and the next threw his arms round the doctor's neck, and hugged him violently, uttering some endearing exclamations.

'Where has he been?' asked Carruthers.

'First in Edinburgh, and for the last couple of days in Kilbarton, drinking hard, the brute!' he muttered aside through his teeth.

Kate hovered about her father, trying to soothe his restlessness.

'Give him this,' Dr. Wright said, coming up to her, for he knew she would not leave him,—'give him half of this,' holding up a phial, 'to-night; it may calm him—only half, remember. Keep the rest for to-morrow night.'

'Is he very ill this time?' asked Kate in an anxious tone.

'It's the worst attack I've seen him in!'

'But—he will—oh! he won—'t di—e? he will get over it, Dr. Wright?' said Kate with a look of agonized suspense.

'He may calm down to sleep after this,' holding up the phial, 'but possibly he will become more excited. Should that go on through to-night and to-morrow, give him the second half of this early to-morrow evening.'

'Oh yes! and that will save him?' eagerly.

'If anything can, it will. Should it not calm him, then, Miss Murrie, he will, I fear, succumb.'

One wild shriek burst from Kate, and falling on her knees beside the unconscious mass on the bed, she exclaimed, 'You shall *not* die, my beautiful one! I will hold you in my arms, and *keep* you there.'

'You had better leave him alone, he has fallen into a doze,' said Dr. Wright; 'you will have work enough when he comes to a bit. And take the watching by turns,' he added kindly as he bade Kate good-night.

'What a determined and devoted creature she is!' he said to Carruthers as she 'lighted him down the stair.'

'Oh, she'd die for him, she's that fond o' him!'

'Well, keep a look-out after her, and don't let her sacrifice herself for such a selfish animal,' said the doctor as he tucked himself into the dog-cart, and throwing the reins to his man, lighted his cigar, and presently disappeared in the darkness.

'He's home?' said Alice next morning to Kate, who, pale and worn, entered the dining-room at a late hour to prepare the breakfast.

'Father? Yes.'

'Ill?'

'Very.'

'*Miserabile.* Same old scenes over again. How long is this wretchedness to last? And what a horrible morning it is! Our room shook last night with the wind; and what with the knocking and scuffling, it was something awful.'

'The children didn't hear?' asked Kate, the desire of whose

heart it is to save her father from degradation in the eyes of his family and the public.

'Didn't they just!' said Alice; 'I could hardly control Flo at all; she wanted to fly to you. How is he?' in a cold tone.

'Better; but, girls, he must be kept very quiet all day. Dr. Wright says to-night will be a crisis,' and she quivered with emotion.

At this moment Miss Ellerslie was ushered into the room by Grizzel. She had promised to spend the whole day with Kate, and to have a long, quiet time together, while the young people were spending their Saturday holiday at the Hall.

'How will you manage to get over in such a storm?' asked Gerty, shaking hands all round. 'I would have kept the brougham for you, but Papa has to attend a county meeting at Kilbarton, and it has to take him.'

The rain battered against the window as she spoke, and the wind shook the crazy casement.

'In the dog-cart!' Alice exclaimed.

'The dog-cart! Gussy and Flo will be'—

'Oh, we're not going to be bothered with *them*,' interrupted Alice; 'one must have a free day now and then. We'll just say to Lady Morell that we couldn't bring them out in such a day.'

'And she'll say,' struck in May, throwing herself into her ladyship's attitude, and mimicking her voice, '"Sweet lambs! angelic lambs! ah, the elements are too severe for their fragile, innocent limbs," and tell us what Sir John used to say to her about exposing herself to a shower—a sunny shower, perhaps. My word, some people are well cared for, while others may drift or die, and nobody cares.'

Kate, dismayed at the unexpected state of matters in which Miss Ellerslie found her, knowing what a day of ceaseless watching and anxiety was before her, was stung too with the cool indifference of the twins in leaving the children—in addition to the brunt of every other thing—on her tired heart and shoulders. She did not, however, speak, and the whole household, with the exception of Carruthers, who was left to watch

the 'patient,' being assembled, they seated themselves at the breakfast table. The boys were in high spirits; they had slept through storm and scuffle, and, bright and rosy, talked with delight over the hopes of the holiday at the Hall.

'Mr. Bruce said we were to have the ponies to-day,' exclaimed Dick, 'but this awful wind and rain will put an end to that.'

'Oh! but we'll have billiards in the house,' said Frank.

'And there's the gold fish to feed, and the pups to play with, and oh! lots of things,' struck in Charlie and Ned.

'Why can't *I* go?' whined Gussy.

'Because you—'re such a—a baby,' answered Alice.

'It's not fair,' he retorted.

'No matter, you're not going,' said May; 'so be quiet.'

The twins were 'got up' in their best—not much to boast of after all; but their neat, clean dresses, and bright eyes and shining hair, over which, by the way, they spent a great deal of time, were a pleasant picture.

They all sat down, and breakfast went on. It was nearly over, when suddenly the door burst open, and Major Murrie, in his waterproof, and holding a large umbrella over his head, entered! Advancing, with a staggering gait, to the table, he took hold of one end of the table-cloth, and with a great jerk pulled it towards him, while tea-pot, and porridge plates, hot water and milk jugs, cups and plates, rolled helter-skelter over each other, and fell with a crash upon the floor. Every one rose, but no one spoke or had presence of mind to avert the catastrophe.

'Y—ou were all bl—ack-balling me be—hind m—y face —a—nd y—ou're all drin—k—drinking a—t my ex—pense,' and he glared round. 'Go, ev—ery on—e of you, abo—a—bout your business.'

In the twinkling of an eye the room was cleared. Too glad to get out of his way, the children slunk off, followed by Gertrude, and the father was left alone with Kate.

'Father,' was all she could utter as she went up to him and laid her trembling hand on his arm.

'Ah, there they are again!' he screamed, cowering at sight of some imaginary spirits; 'come away, Kate, they'll have me! Ah—look—look!' pointing to a corner of the room. 'Come! quick, quick!' and he dragged her from the room.

She was used to this, and went. Soon the effects of the house-quake passed off, and she could see from the drawing-room window the rickety dog-cart being filled, the twins muffled up in old rusty waterproofs and holding on their hats, and the boys patting Puck, who, with his one eye and three soundish legs, was to hobble along with his cargo to the Hall. Dick acted as charioteer, while Frank was ready to jump down to take a stone out of Puck's shoe, or try to avert any stumble that might threaten. There was a subdued, almost sad look over the young faces as, glancing at the window where they believed their father to be, they drove off; but Kate knew how soon their spirits would rise when away from their depressing home influences and amid cheerful scenes.

'Kate! Kate!' her father suddenly cried,—he had been walking up and down the room with his umbrella up, picking his steps as if on dangerous, or at least dirty ground,—'Kate, the roof's falling! Mercy! the demons will get at me after all;' and with a terribly scared look, he dragged her down, and squatting under the table, insisted on her sitting or crouching beside him there. 'Don't go,' as after a protracted *séance* she attempted to rise. 'They'll be at me; look there! look there!' and pulling the umbrella towards him, he tried vainly to put it up over his own head and Kate's.

Here Carruthers with Gertrude found them a couple of hours afterwards. Gertrude kept out of the way after this spectacle, and devoted herself to amusing Gussy and Flo, the kindest thing she could do, while Kate and Carruthers watched over their pitiful charge. This quieter mood, however, changed; as the day wore away, the craving for drink became terrible. Every pretext was used to soothe him, with but very indifferent success; all persuasions to make him eat failed; and as night

came on Kate's anxiety increased tenfold. Suddenly, after a short lull, he started up and cried out in frenzied tones, his eyes rolling wildly, and his whole frame quivering, 'Give me brandy—give me it—one glass—just one glass, or I'll—fling myself from the tower; do you hear? There they are; don't you see them?' pointing to a corner of the room, and opening the door, he rushed out. Whether in his dazed state he ever would have reached the tower is doubtful. Any high window, however, would have answered the purpose as well, and Kate flew after him, promising to give him something. She thought of her precious little bottle, and succeeded, at last, in forcing him to his room.

One more appeal she made as he quieted down somewhat: 'Father, the doctor said if you took brandy to-day when you are ill, you would perhaps—per—haps'—

'Get me—brandy,' peremptorily; 'I'm suffocated.'

'Kill yourself!' she at last gasped. She said it purposely, though with a bursting heart, for this idea was the one thing that kept him when in semi-rational moments from drinking to self-destruction. He seemed staggered, and rolled about the room, then sank on the ground, shading his eyes from the sight of the imaginary haunting demons who had followed on his track.

Leaving him apparently exhausted with Carruthers, Kate rushed to her room for the bottle, the contents of which were their last hope. If after taking it he slept, Dr. Wright had said he might waken on this side of time, if not—

It was dark, pitch dark, but by the light of the small lamp she carried, Kate found the bottle. Snatching it up, she examined it; it looked empty! She shook it and listened, but not a sound! It must be the wrong one! But no; this was it, and every drop was gone! Summoning Grizzel, she asked her in an icy tone what had happened to the bottle.

'Eh, mem, I was jist smellin' it, an' it fell oot o' my hand; the cork jamp oot, but it didna break, an' I hopet it wadna signifee. Eh, div ye hear the thunder, mem?' as a long clap came rumbling through the storm. 'What a maist awfu' nicht!'

'I must go for more,' was all Kate said, taking down her ulster and hat.

'Never, mem, in this storm!'

No reply. Hastily equipping herself, and snatching the bottle from Grizzel, Kate said, 'Put the children to bed; and if Miss Ellerslie or Carruthers ask for me, say I have gone to Hilton for this,' holding up the phial. 'I'll be back soon.'

It was useless to remonstrate,—'the young Missus was that determined, she would take her own way,'—and Kate started.

Under that cold exterior, passions not less angry than the fierce winds which blew and shook her slight frame raged. But a great human love nerved her to brave the stormy elements. She knew a short cut across the hills, which would bring her out close to Johnnie Cramm's door, and she struck at once into that. It was pitch dark; rain and sleet beat pitilessly upon her as she breasted the open hill-side. 'A God of love!' she kept muttering, as she stumbled up, 'how can people say that? they don't believe it!'

'Battle and murder,
Tempest and thunder,
Anguish and pain,
Dying and slain,
Anger and strife,
Such is our life.'

'Not the life a God of love would send any poor creature into!' Kate, the current of whose thoughts was always running on these subjects, had, almost unconsciously, to back up her rebellious views by reiterating them; and there hovered round her a good angel, who, at certain seasons, went down into the deadly pool of her heart and troubled its waters, sending drops of healing through her unbelieving soul. He was at his blessed work to-night.

Up the steep, lonesome way she scrambled, drenched by the deluge of black rain, and battered by the driving wind. Several times she fell, cutting her hands and feet against big, sharp stones, but only to rise and clamber on, bleeding and bruised. For a time it seemed as if for every step she

advanced she was driven two back, but after a long and terrible struggle she gained the highest point. Here the fury of the storm burst over her; the blind forces of Nature seemed arrayed against her; and the thunder, which had been rumbling in the valleys, rolled nearer and nearer. Gasping, terrified, it seemed as if she must yield; but no, her father's life depended on her reaching the village, and lifting her clenched hand, she shook it in the darkness, and vowed to accomplish her object in spite of tempest or fiends. In her rage the little bottle fell out of her trembling hand! In an agony she groped about for it, but in the blackness all around, her search was vain.

After all, her father must die. She knew nothing of the nature of the precious drug; and the bottle, on which the prescription was marked, was lost! Down she sank, dripping and desolate, amid the darkness and driving sleet, on the sodden ground. It was an awful moment, this utter aloneness on the grim hill-top! 'Oh that I might die!' she began, as she so often did, to murmur, when a terrific crash of thunder, nearer than it had yet been, made the word fade upon her lips, and for the first time in her life she felt consciously afraid to die.

'How easily I might be struck by the lightning, and then all would be—over!' Nay, in her heart of hearts she felt assured it would not, and she shook with fear. 'The thunder is close to me; a—nd—yes—yes—I deserve to be struck down,' as a rush of sinful memories rose to mind. 'An—d father will die—too!' and his life stood out next in characters of lurid shame. She closed her eyes, believing that the next flash would answer with vengeance the impious prayer of her heart. But a momentary calm stole over her spirit, the sweet vision of her mother's dear face rose before her, and a prayer she had learned long years ago at that parent's knee spoke within her, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee.' Raising herself, she fell upon her knees, and with clasped hands, in the energy of despair, she cried, 'God—Thou Bible-God—my mother's God—if Thou art near, help *me;* oh, help *me* in *my* trouble!' Still trembling, she opened her eyes, wondering what

would happen. Suddenly a vivid flash lighted up the hill-top; it revealed something shining at her side, and, while the awful thunder broke over her head, she stooped, and her hand touched, then grasped, the precious phial! The light was deadly that had discovered it to her. It had not, however, struck her dead; nay, it had answered her cry for help, it had 'delivered' her. Fresh hope pulsed through her heart, and starting to her feet, she determined to push on. She felt sure the ground was beginning to descend. During a lull in the wind, she caught sight of the distant glimmer of lights in the village below; they seemed to her strained eyes to be waving to her—beckoning her on. And on she went, with many a slip and tumble, still making way; by and by the storm, which had raged so steadily, became more fitful, until at last, with stained garments, and dripping hair, and a terrified, scared look in her large grey eyes, she stood at Johnnie Cramm's counter and thrust the bottle into his hand.

Johnnie, who was very superstitious, started as if she had been a ghost; whereupon she cried out, 'Fill this, Mr. Cramm, do you hear? oh, be quick! be quick!'

Re-assured that his customer was flesh and blood, although so spectral-like, Johnnie filled the bottle, making, as he proceeded, some hospitable offers of tea, or a fire to dry herself at. But no word fell from Kate's lips; she watched his slow movements with feverish haste, and snatching the bottle from his hand, as he was preparing leisurely to 'wrap it up,' she fled from the shop out into the darkness, to meet over again the awful scenes through which she had just passed. But not so. The wind was at her back, and drove her along, and darting through the village, she flew up the hill-side. The lashing rain was ceasing, or falling only in large drops, and the heavy thunder-clouds were parting. As she reached the hill-top, the moon struggled through the sky-rifts, casting a fitful but blessed light across her path, while a star, over which no cloud drifted, kept its friendly twinkle in her eye, and guided her across the dripping heather and the sodden plain—home. Gliding in

at the back-door, her ear caught sound of her father's voice, now groaning, now shrieking against his 'spirit' (forgive, reader, the *double entendre*) foes, and calling to her to come and save him.

In a moment she was by his side, as calm as if she had only come down-stairs, and holding to his lips the draught which it had nearly cost her her life to get, she had the satisfaction of seeing him drink it off. It worked like a charm; gradually the restlessness and excitement calmed down, and at last he fell asleep. At the same moment Kate dropped unconscious into Gertrude's arms.

CHAPTER XXII.

'Sick of that strange disease,
Thy neighbour's health.'

AND what of Rose?

We left her and her mother starting for London, *en route* for some Continental resort, the one drop of sweetness in Rose's cup of poverty and bitterness being the fact that Captain Egerton was also leaving Lonshire, and was actually to be their travelling companion to the great metropolis. She resolved to make the best of her opportunity, but was somewhat hampered in her plans by her ignorance of Captain Egerton. True, she had studied him, but he was reserved in speaking of himself; and although she felt that his tastes led him away from ball-going and hunting, and lay, as she mentally expressed it, in the 'goody' direction, she had not had sufficient chance to acquaint herself with him so as to play her part becomingly. However, she had strong faith in her quickness of discernment and powers of fascination, and the journey was begun, on her part, with alacrity and hope.

'Your friends are all sorry to part with you,' said Mrs. Heywood as the train moved off from Kilbarton Station, and the Honourable Jack and Bruce waved their adieus, while Lady Morell, from the carriage, kissed her hand and flourished a large pocket-handkerchief.

'They have been most kind,' Egerton replied.

'Delightful house the Hall to stay in,' Mrs. Heywood continued. 'Everything that wealth and hospitality can give to make things pleasant.'

'Everything,' abstractedly.

Mrs. Heywood arranged sundry small boxes and packages, when Rose suddenly exclaimed, 'I thought Gerty would have been to see us off. She said she would. I wish I had asked Mr. Morell; he knows all her movements, of course,' with a sly glance at Captain Egerton.

'Possibly there was a new sauce to compound for the Colonel's dinner to-night!' said Mrs. Heywood. 'Everything must give way to his epicureanism; it does seem too bad that an intellectual creature like Gerty should have to drag down her mind to such a low level.'

Captain Egerton was gazing out at the window on the scenes they were fast leaving behind them, nor did he cease to gaze until the train had carried them far beyond them all.

'Pretty county Lonshire,' Mrs. Heywood remarked as he returned to the realities about him.

'Most interesting.'

'You are to be back at the Hall for the weddings, are you not?' asked Rose.

'I scarcely think so. Some of my brother-officers will want leave then, and as they have all homes and relatives to welcome them, they have a prior claim to a man that has neither.'

'Gerty told me you were to be back.'

This, as the reader may remember, was not true; but Rose was not particular.

'Did she?' with a sudden gleam of interest in his eye, 'and did she—did she'—

'How would you like to assist at *three* weddings in a slump?' she continued, watching with snake-like intentness the expression of her victim's face.

'*Three* weddings?'

'I don't believe the Honourable Jack will wait longer.'

'Poor Lady Morell will be happy at last,' said Mrs. Heywood; 'how she dotes on Gerty!'

Captain Egerton made no further remark, but took out a book from his bag, offering, at the same time, the *Graphic* and the morning newspaper to his companions.

'Pretty cool,' thought Rose, who had settled herself for a long talk with him, but she smilingly accepted the papers.

She was, however, less absorbed in her literature than he was in his, and continued at intervals to glance at him. His well-built figure, his military bearing, and his bronzed but very handsome face, with its quiet but firm expression, were exactly, she said to herself, her 'style;' while a beautifully shaped hand, which all unconsciously he displayed to advantage while cutting up the pages of his book, did not escape her observant eye. She gave the reins to her fancy, and pictured him in a succession of circumstances, as, for instance, the general of his regiment, the baronet, the hero of his country! Alongside of himself and his successive titles and honours she placed herself. How her beauty and her manners would shine in such free scope! How proud she would be of him—almost as proud as of herself! and what a lasting pity it would be, for his own sake, if he threw himself away upon some inferior being! All unbidden, Gertrude, in her dashing beauty, her fearless independence and truthfulness of character, and the evidently growing seriousness of her mind, stood forward in the eye o her fancy as she thought of Captain Egerton's wife to be. But a spasm of jealousy seized her heart, and a determination which had in these past weeks been growing, became fixed within her to supplant or out-rival her early and kindest friend. To back up this resolve, she conjured up or composed memories of fancied slights and unkindnesses; and when, after what to her seemed an age, and not the Golden Age either, Captain Egerton closed his book, her heart was filled with envy and malice towards Gertrude. She would insert her poisonous inuendoes skilfully. He was not a man to be made to begin conversation when he chose to be silent, but once tackled in talk, he must, as

a gentleman, listen to what she said. She was satisfied they were not engaged, and equally convinced that something was ajar between them; and if a man has been slighted by one woman, she argued with herself, he is all the more susceptible of delicate and kindly attentions from another. His book, whatever it might be, had improved his temper, she thought, he seemed ready now to talk to her.

He chatted pleasantly about the Continent; and they told him their plans, and how they had fixed, after spending a few days in London, to start for Paris, *en route* to Zurich or some other quiet Swiss town. What would he recommend? Garnlee was let for two years, and Mrs. Heywood expressed her wish that her daughter should have the benefit of further residence abroad before the inevitable settling down to the cares of a household of her own.

He inquired what particular line Miss Heywood was to follow during this Continental residence; was it to study music or languages, or—

Had both ladies spoken out the unvarnished truth, the answer would have been to pick up for Rose a rich husband, who would deliver them out of all their pinching pecuniary embarrassments, and place them in the position to which the young lady's great personal attractions entitled her.

'I wish Rose to develop her talent for music. She knows most foreign languages perfectly, still one is none the worse of practice in them too, and this you never get anywhere so good as in the countries themselves.'

'No, certainly.'

'*I* should like to help in some mission,—if only,' with a modest blush, 'if only—I were the least fit for it,' said Rose.

Mrs. Heywood opened her eyes wide at this new and startling announcement from her frivolous daughter; but Captain Egerton did not notice this, and Rose went on, 'I envy, yes, I *envy* those women who devote themselves to such work! One sees some meaning in a life like theirs, Captain Egerton.'

No reply.

'Or to be a nurse!' she continued, 'to be helping sick and wounded people,' with kindling enthusiasm, thinking how she must be touching Captain Egerton's sympathies by the vein on which she had accidentally struck; 'to bind up and heal our brave soldiers' wounds in hospitals, for instance, when carried from the field of battle. Mother, might not I go in for that?' Surely Captain Egerton would interfere to carry her off from such horrible scenes; but he made no remark, and she rattled on, assuming that he was weighing her interesting words. 'Oh, do let me, mother. Perhaps you could tell us of some good training places?' addressing Captain Egerton.

But he answered gravely, 'It takes much to nerve a delicate woman for such work, Miss Heywood; the sights connected with a field of battle are terrible for her.'

'Then you don't approve of women going to such places?' exclaimed Rose, a conventional smile covering the mortification she felt.

'I did not say so.'

'But you don't think *me* fit for it?'

'I did not say that either,' he answered, smiling in spite of himself.

'Tell me,' she added in a low tone,—Mrs. Heywood was deep by this time in *Punch*,—'oh, do tell me, Captain Egerton, what you would advise me to do. If you knew how aimless it is to be going from one place to another, never taking root anywhere, and having no—what shall I call it?—sphere, you would try and help me.' Something like a tear glistened in her beautiful eyes as she fixed them on him, and Egerton felt his interest in this girl roused at last.

Ah, what pains he took with her! He spoke to her in the guilelessness of his heart, believing that her cry for help was genuine, that no one had ever shown her the path of life! and that, in God's providence, they were thrown together that he might point out to her the one thing needful. And faithful he was. It was probably, too, he believed, his last opportunity.

'How short the journey has seemed!' said Rose, as in the evening they steamed into Charing Cross Station. 'This has been one of the happiest days of my life, Captain Egerton,' she added *sotto voce.*

'It has been most pleasant to me too,' he answered heartily.

'I shall never forget all you have said to me; you have made things so very plain.'

'Shall we see you in town before we start?' she added. 'Oh! I hope so,' with a bewitchingly pleading look; 'and you won't forget the book you promised me?'

He had merely *recommended* one to her, still he would be happy to give it to her.

'We shall be at the Charing Cross Hotel for a few days,' Mrs. Heywood said. 'Do take pity upon us, and come in for an hour; the trains run at all hours from Woolwich.' So he promised; and on parting found himself pledged to appear at the hotel on a certain day and at a certain hour, 'so that there might be no fear of missing him.'

In the lift, of which Mrs. Heywood and Rose availed themselves to be hoisted up to their elevated quarters—they got a room high up, cheap—were two gentlemen and a lady.

'Glad to get a peep of Egerton!' said one of the gentlemen to the lady, evidently his wife. 'He has been on leave up in Scotland. He's to be in town on Thursday; we shall see him then.'

'Pardon me,' said Mrs. Heywood, in dulcet tones, 'he's coming to see us here on Wednesday.'

She liked the look of these people; they might be advantageous acquaintances, especially as knowing Captain Egerton. They bowed their thanks, and the gentleman remarked to the lady, 'He had not heard of the serious illness of his uncle Sir Everard, and seemed terribly cut up when I told him of it. The news only reached the club this morning.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs. Heywood, in the anxious tone of a relative. 'Is he not expected to recover? where exactly is Sir Everard at present?'

'He is in Paris, *en route* to spend the winter in Italy, but meantime he is detained there.'

'He has his family and friends with him, of course?' said Mrs. Heywood.

'He has his faithful valet; but he is, as you doubtless know, an unmarried man, or rather, I should say, a widower.'

'Oh—yes—yes!' said Mrs. Heywood, who, although she knew Captain Egerton was heir to a baronetcy, was utterly ignorant of who or whereabouts the existing baronet was.

Here the little party was let out at their landing-place, and Mrs. Heywood and Rose proceeded alone some flights higher.

'Who are these?' asked Mrs. Heywood of the conductor.

'The Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Pierce,' the man answered, 'and his younger brother, Mr. Arthur Pierce.'

'Do they stay some time here, do you know?'

'They've only come a couple of days since, and they generally put up here for a fortnight or so.'

'What a miserable hole!' exclaimed Rose, as the maid who had ushered them to their room closed the door behind her; 'and how saucy these servants are, if you haven't handfuls of money, or a handle to your name!'

'Very.'

'Oh, it is hateful to be poor!'

'Most! You had better take to your nursing,' in a mocking tone, 'only Captain Egerton did not think you fit. How could you be such a hypocrite, Rose, as to talk in that goody way to him to-day! It made me quite sick to hear you!'

'If only some one would take us to the theatre to-night,' said Rose, ignoring her mother's words, and shaking out dresses and hats from her box.

'I am too tired to go down-stairs even,' said Mrs. Heywood, on whom the parting from her home, and the debt-leaving behind, and the journey, and the prospect of a very straitened and uncomfortable residence abroad, told more than on her speculative daughter.

'What a bore!' said Rose; 'I had set my heart on seeing these people in the *salon* to-night.'

'Them! they'll have a private sitting-room, you may depend,' said Mrs. Heywood wearily.

'So they will; oh, well! we'll go to bed, and get a long rest, and be ready for to-morrow.'

And the mother and daughter lost for a while their anxieties and schemes in the passionless land of dreams.

Captain Egerton turned up at the hotel on Wednesday, and at Mrs. Heywood's request, introduced her and Rose to his friends the Pierces. Rose contrived to monopolize him for a good half-hour, questioning him about some of the many schemes for good in London, and about Mrs. Jones' work among the soldiers at Woolwich. 'Oh, how I *should* like to see that lady!' she said with enthusiasm at the end of a long talk. 'Mother,' addressing Mrs. Heywood, who was listening with becoming interest to the Hon. Mrs. Pierce's account of a Young Women's Christian Association just started in a West-End district of London, in which she took a prominent part, 'wouldn't you like to see Mrs. Jones?'

'Mrs. who, love?'

'Mrs. Jones, the lady who devotes herself to the soldiers at *Woolwich*,' with a slight emphasis on the word.

'Oh dear, yes!' catching up the cue, 'but I'm afraid it would give Captain Egerton a great deal of trouble. Perhaps Mrs. Pierce would like to see her too.'

Mrs. Pierce warmed on the subject, and before Captain Egerton left a party was arranged for Woolwich.

'We have some cousins at Old Charlton,' said Mrs. Pierce, 'whom we must visit before we leave town. We could lunch there, if your friends,' bowing to Mrs. Heywood and Rose, 'will favour us by accompanying us, and walk along to Woolwich. Perhaps,' smilingly, 'you or Major Drew will give us tea, Captain Egerton, in your quarters?'

Captain Egerton becomingly expressed the honour it would

give them to see the ladies. Mr. Pierce and Arthur fell in pleasantly with the plan.

Rose, when parting with Egerton, contrived to say, 'How good you are! how can I thank you for the trouble you take to help me!'

He seemed pleased with her enthusiasm about Woolwich and Mrs. Jones, and she felt that already some links of the chain with which she meant to bind him to herself were fastened around him.

The visit to Woolwich was hardly to Rose's mind successful. Her estimate of everything radiated from self and reflected to the same centre. The day was cold and drizzling, which prevented her appearing in her new and charming costume, added to which, Minnie Gage, a young sister of Mrs. Pierce, for whom a holiday was got from school, turned up to go with them. She was, like all school-girls when let loose, 'in tiresomely high spirits,' Rose mentally pronounced upon her, 'and horribly and selfishly *exigeante*.' Arthur was evidently of a different opinion, for he had eyes for no one but the pretty, fair girl; and she, in the ease of conscious acceptability with her own home-people, was artlessly happy. She was not attracted by the strangers; for Rose took no trouble to please her own sex, unless they might be useful for her own selfish ends, and Mrs. Heywood was absorbed in Mrs. Pierce's interesting account of the Young Women's Christian Institute.

'Min, you will see Captain Egerton to-day at Woolwich,' said Mrs. Pierce to her sister as they seated themselves in the train for Old Charlton.

'Oh, I *am* glad!' said Minnie heartily; 'what a lot of crests he will have for me by now! And,' she added in a whisper, into her sister's ear, 'he promised to show me the th—e drummer's piebald, that *will* always march at the head of the troop.'

'You don't mean to say you asked a V.C. man to collect crests for you, Min!' interrupted Mr. Pierce, laughing.

'Oh, but I did long ago! and he gave me a whole boxful in

the holidays, and said he would get more. Have *you* got any for me?' looking archly at her brother-in-law.

'I leave all these charitable deeds to Franey,' glancing at his wife; 'no doubt she has a supply for you.'

Minnie, who had begun by being the centre of attraction, held quite unconsciously the post of honour all day. Her gay spirits and fresh delight with everything were infectious. At Old Charlton she romped with the little cousins, and at Woolwich she had no sooner shaken hands with Captain Egerton, than she actually dashed into the 'crest' affair, and kept him explaining some interesting specimens he had collected for her for nearly half an hour.

'Where are all the soldiers?' she at last asked Captain Egerton. 'I thought Woolwich was full of them. It is quite a plain place, just like Carlands,' the county town near her home.

'Ah, Miss Heywood!' he said, turning round and seeing Rose, who was waiting in gathering indignation to get her turn of him, 'this is the hour Mrs. Jones has her writing and arithmetic classes with the soldiers who are free, and she closes with a short Bible lesson. Would you like to go at once?'

'Immensely, Captain Egerton, if you are sure it is not taking up your time.'

They were standing in Major Drew's sitting-room, his wife having invited Captain Egerton and his friends to afternoon tea.

'I cannot go myself,' said Egerton, 'but Miss Drew, our Major's sister, has kindly offered to take you. Ah, here she is,' as a short, shrewd-looking lady of a certain age bustled into the room. She had a green leather bag in her hand, and peered sharply at Rose through her spectacles.

After a brief introduction on Egerton's part, the lady said, 'Now we must go. It's just the time,' taking out her watch, 'a minute to it at least.'

Rose, who felt as if she were following a guide into the Purgatorium, so little did *she* want to go to any classes or Bible-

readings least of all, when Captain Egerton, whose company alone would have made it endurable, was not going, smiled sweetly, and expressed her sense of obligation to Miss Drew.

As she was leaving the room, Rose heard Minnie say to Captain Egerton, 'How *awfully* good of you to remember your promise! can we go now?'

And she caught sight of Egerton's animated, amused look, as with assumed gravity he replied, 'An officer of Her Britannic Majesty's service forget his promise to Miss Minnie Gage? never!'

Where in all the world were they going? was the one thought of Rose's mind, as during the next very wearisome hour, seated beside Miss Drew in a quiet corner of the room, they listened to Mrs. Jones 'holding forth.' While some of the men were writing, she gave a lesson to the others in arithmetic, her clear and simple teaching completely arresting the attention of the men. A quarter of an hour before the close, she opened her Bible and read a few verses, the men listening absorbed while she spoke to them earnestly about 'the Captain of their salvation.' There was a strong bond between this lady and her audience, and the respect and affection they personally entertained for her was heightened by the interest she took in their wives and families.

But why had Captain Egerton not come with her? was the burden of Rose's thoughts throughout; and what a waste of time was all this stupid meeting, when she had come to Woolwich to see and be w th him! She, however, expressed her great delight at the whole thing, but nearly again overshot her mark, for Miss Drew, taking out her watch, assured her there still was time to assist at a similar class for history and geography in another quarter. But Rose, irritated almost beyond endurance, replied pleasantly that much, very much as she would like it, she felt it was her duty to rejoin her mother. She had lost the chance of being introduced to a number of officers among whom Minnie was sparkling as she and Miss Drew regained the Major's quarters; and Captain

Egerton, who was polite and attentive in talking to her when she appeared, seemed, however, much more amused with Minnie's lively spirits and fun than interested in *her* and her talk about Mrs. Jones' 'charming meeting.'

In writing to Gertrude that same evening, Rose dilated on the events of the day, and on the evident admiration on Captain Egerton's part for Minnie, whom she characterized as 'a flirting, scheming hoyden,' but between whom and Captain Egerton there was quite an understanding, and they were old friends and connexions. Indeed, Mrs. Pierce had hinted to her that Captain Egerton and her sister were *fiancés*, and certainly their conduct at Woolwich could only be explained on this understanding.

Captain Egerton appeared once again at the hotel before the Heywoods left. This time he was summoned by a note from Mrs. Heywood, telling him that they were starting for Paris, and asking him to come and tell her about *pensions* and hotels. It was a mere *ruse* to bring him again, for they had settled all their plans. Rose had, however, set her heart on seeing him again, while Mrs. Heywood was resolved to get an introduction to his uncle, Sir Everard, and felt she could bring this more easily about in casual conversation than by a point-blank note requesting this favour.

The Pierces were gone, and Minnie was safe at school. Rose looked lovely in her brown costume, her dark style of beauty being enhanced by the soft flush of excitement at his coming. They were sitting in the library of the hotel when he entered.

'So you start to-morrow?' he said in a tone of too great indifference to please Rose.

'Yes, we must get across the Channel before the snow comes,' said Mrs. Heywood; 'every one says we are to have a terribly cold winter.'

'Paris will be cold.'

'Bitterly; but it is nothing to those who are strong. How is your uncle, Captain Egerton?'

'Considerably better, his servant writes me. I heard this morning.'

'What a pity he should have been taken ill in Paris of all places!' said Mrs Heywood, who was delighted at the detention. 'Can we take any message or parcel from you to him?' in a tone of assumed indifference.

Captain Egerton paused, then said, 'How very kind of you! He has a favourite little clock at Dent's here, being repaired, and Banks writes me that his master misses it, but won't have it sent in case of spoiling the works. He would not, however, object to it being taken by a careful private hand. It is the mere whim of a sick man; but if you would be so really kind as to'—

'Pray have it sent to us,' interrupted Mrs. Heywood. 'I shall take the greatest care of it, and shall forward it to Sir Everard at once.'

'So many thanks,' said Egerton; 'I shall write and tell him it is coming.'

What's in a clock? reader, perhaps you exclaim! Much, very much, in the hands of a clever woman of the world.

Major Drew dropped in a little later by appointment with Egerton, and Mrs. Heywood having expressed a great desire to see Doré's pictures, the gentlemen agreed to escort the ladies to the gallery. The afternoon was fine, and they started walking.

Captain Egerton was silent and abstracted, and Rose found it difficult to interest him.

'I had a letter from Miss Ellerslie this morning,' she at last said, as she and the Captain followed the Major and Mrs. Heywood down Regent Street.

'Ah!' with a sudden light in his eye.

'She writes such amusing letters'—

No reply.

'She is clever, do you not think? It is just a pity she is so very satirical. She hits off people to the life. If only

you could hear her *do* "Aunt Dorothy!" It is quite as good as a play.'

Captain Egerton did not speak.

'What a pity Aunt Dorothy is not in town! She lives in Brook Street, and visits none but the upper ten. Oh, it is such fun to hear her talking of Lady this and the Duke of that! She doesn't care a pin's point for anybody unless they've a title of some kind or another. But all the Ellerslies are—proud.'

'Miss Ellerslie seemed to me singularly free of all that,' said Egerton, driven to defend Gertrude behind her back.

'Oh! she has it all the same. She doesn't care to visit any but the *élite* of Lonshire, and the Honourable Jack is even more exclusive. So they are well matched for that.'

Captain Egerton winced, but listened in silence, while Rose went on—

'He makes a fool of himself in his great devotion to her. Witness the Chemistry Lecture. I thought the Colonel would have been mortified by such an exhibition of his future son-in—his favourite Jack—but no—he accounted for it in some slip-shod sort of way, and the thing passed. I wish you had seen Gertrude a couple of years ago, she was so handsome!'

'*Was?*'

'*I* think her very good-looking still, but it's not the opinion generally. She has become—well, one must confess it—she has grown very stout.'

'Miss Ellerslie?'

'But perhaps you admire, eh—large women?'

'Large-hearted, generous women, I certainly do!' with some severity in his tone.

'Do you think Miss Ellerslie pretty?'

'*Pretty!* oh dear no!'

'Sweet-looking—surely!' mistaking altogether his meaning.

No answer.

'She doesn't seem to be going in for a gay winter, at any

rate,' Rose continued; 'but another such season as the last two or three would knock up any but a Hercules.'

'Indeed!'

'Lonshire is a very gay county. And then Colonel Ellerslie goes in for that sort of thing. He plays whist with his cronies while she is dancing and—a—nd flirting away. Lady Morell chaperones her, or Mrs. Yorke Ewing. She has everything in her favour, for these are our crack families. Ah, here are Clotilde Græme and Mrs. Græme!' as these ladies came out of a shop in Oxford Street.

The gentlemen were introduced, Captain Egerton as a friend of Miss Maitland.

'How wretched poor Clotilde still looks!' said Rose as they parted. 'She has never got over her terrible disappointment.'

'She *is* pale,' said Egerton, 'but has an interesting face. They go soon to St. Helen's, I suppose?'

'If Clotilde can help it, *she* won't. She can't bear seeing Gertrude now, and she is so much with Miss Maitland. I don't believe Gertrude meant to cut her out, but she certainly did for poor Clotilde.'

Rose paused. She hoped Captain Egerton would betray his anxiety to hear her tale, but he was provokingly self-controlled, so she went on—

'They were engaged—yes, engaged—when Mr. Freer came to St. Helen's to visit Clotilde, and be introduced to them all. It was winter, and we were all mad about skating. Gertrude skates beautifully—and—well, she threw her glamour round Mr. Freer, and he fell in love with *her*. Clotilde was blind to what every one else saw. At last the scales fell from her eyes. He proposed to Gertrude, and of course was scornfully refused. She had merely been amusing herself!'

'She did not know of his engagement to Miss—Clotilde?'

'Perfectly. I'm merely telling you the facts because you might hear a worse version, and I don't want you to think hardly of Gertrude; but she used often to talk about him to me, laugh at him behind his back, draw him on figuratively,

as well as literally, to the ice. So she amuses herself with people for the time!'

The Doré Gallery was inspected, but Captain Egerton was unusually taciturn, and did not 'show off' his favourite pictures to advantage. The poisoned dart rankled at his heart and embittered his spirit. He longed to ask some explanation of the tale of wanton heartlessness to which he had just listened with such pain, to find out traces of remorse in Gertrude's heart for the injury inflicted, to draw out something tending to extenuate the part she had played. But he knew not how, and parted from the ladies with a dull weight at his heart.

Rose knew all that his pained look betokened, and triumphed in her success. She was more deeply than ever in love with him, she assured herself; and if she felt less sanguine to-day of her own power over him, she was sure she had weakened Gertrude's.

His coldness to Rose, whose thinly-veiled unfaithfulness to her friend disgusted him, only increased her passionate feelings towards him and her malice against Gertrude. The clock and the introduction were in her hands. 'If I can't injure them in one way,' she mentally declared, 'I certainly shall in another,' and her evil eye fell still more blightingly upon him as she marked him for her victim.

CHAPTER XXIII.

'His nature is too noble for the world.
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth.
What his breast purges, that his tongue must vent.'

BETWEEN Sir Everard Egerton and his nephew there was a breach. Captain Egerton was the son of his only brother, who had married against his imperious elder brother's will, and had drawn down upon his devoted head his lasting displeasure. Yet the object of his choice was, in all respects, a noble woman. An only child, and brought up in a luxurious home, she, in the sunshine of that home, and the deeper and richer glow of the love of Harry Egerton, knew not what sorrow meant. But a terrible reverse came. By an unfortunate speculation her father lost his all, and she, with her parents, was reduced to beggary. It was then that Grace Brealey discovered to those about her the stuff of which she was made, and stepped forth, as many another woman has done, from the shelter of luxury, to breast the storm and break its fury ere it should light on the heads of her broken-hearted parents. They removed to London, where she endeavoured to get teaching; and being highly accomplished, she, by the aid of kind and influential friends, got as many pupils as she wished. Harry Egerton stood by her side, cheering her with his approval, and blessing her heart with his love; while his own spirit was nerved to redoubled exertion in his profession, the sooner to be able to offer her a home, and

put an end to her toil. It was just then that Sir Everard, full of ambitious schemes, returned with his regiment from India, and found his brother 'entangled,' as he called it, 'with a lot of paupers.' Sir Everard was rich, and had his brother in his power. By their father's will, not only were the estates of Kalme attached to the title, which descended to Everard, but with the exception of a paltry annuity, Harry was left dependent upon his brother's generosity; the old baronet, at the dictates of his family pride, concentrating in his eldest son the means of sustaining with dignity the long hereditary status of the Egertons.

He counted, too, on the good feeling of Everard, 'to look after Harry;' but as too many in similar cases have done, he reckoned without his host.

In his pride and disappointment, Sir Everard gave the young barrister the alternative either of breaking off this low engagement with 'a poor governess,' or breaking with himself, his only and all-powerful brother.

Harry did not think twice on the matter. His heart and honour were pledged to Grace,—he would sooner have parted with his own life than with her,—but it was a bitter, bitter trial to have the doors of his brother's heart and home shut against him. As all his friends predicted, blessed with the love and sympathy of Grace by his side, he made his mark in his profession. Three children gladdened their home, and were nurtured in the 'fear and admonition of the Lord.' After long and unremitting industry, Harry reached a high and honourable place in his profession, and the noble character with which he began his career went with him through life. Just, however, as he was plucking the fruit of the seed his patient hand had sown, and at a comparatively early age, death laid him low, and a few months later his faithful Grace followed him. They transmitted to their children, not great wealth indeed, but a good name, which is 'rather to be chosen than great riches.'

One of the daughters had died before her parents, and the

other did not long survive the shock of their death. Thus within a year young Harry Egerton was left alone, without a near relative in the world except his uncle Sir Everard. He had chosen the army as his profession, and had seen service abroad, highly distinguishing himself by his bravery. Yet when, flushed with honours, he returned home, it was to find the good parents, who had made it home, gone for ever, and his sister Mary on the very borders of the spirit-world. How he clung to her! how he watched by her and tended her! and how her sweet Christianity touched and impressed his heart! Many a talk they had, and many a lesson he learned from her child-like faith and resignation; and when she, too, bade farewell to earth and its fading joys, it was, he felt sure, to enter upon the pure and lasting happiness of heaven.

'Do you think, Harry,' they were her last words as he rested her in his arms, and laid her dying head upon his breast,—'do you think it is true that our dearest friend will be sent to the gate,' glancing upward, 'to meet us? If so, mother will be—b—e—meeting me!'

A look of glory lighted up her face.

'Yes, yes—Jesus—wi—ll send her—and, if I may, I—will be wait—waiting at the gate for y—ou!'

He bent his lips on the dear face. She gazed at him with a look of unutterable love and peace, then closed her eyes, and drawing one gentle sigh, was gone. On the stone which marked the graves of all he held dear on earth, young Egerton caused the words to be graven, 'These all died in faith.'

He carried about with him in his loneliness the sweet and sustaining assurance that they were safe and together in the Father's house, and that they would be looking out for him to follow after them. Up to this crisis in his life Harry Egerton had lived for the present, and that only. He was upright and moral, honourable in thought and action, and a splendid soldier. His love for his parents and sisters was almost proverbial, and the distinctions to which he aspired in his profession were dear to him from the honour they would

reflect on them, and for the pleasure their sympathy and delight in his advancement would afford him. But now, ah, now! surrounded with friends and admirers, with fresh fields of glory opening before him, his heart was crushed. There were none on whose love he had a right to count, none to whom he was indispensable. The place of his graves was the one spot on earth where his lone, stricken heart now felt at home.

Yet the path they had trod, the way by which they had entered in at the golden gate, was unknown to him; and as, like the great Dreamer, he followed them, catching gleams of the city into which they entered, he wished himself there! But how to follow them? There was a felt gulf between him and them; praise to God, not yet a fixed gulf. He was not yet a member of that household of faith, but, please God, he would be. And as he mused, the words which, in his pure and happy home, he had learned, and the sweet talks in the family gatherings round the fire on the Sunday nights, rose to mind. Then came the unquenchable longing to know his father's and his mother's God; to know Him whose presence, too, had cheered his sister in *her* lonely hours, and had nerved her to pass through death itself, in such simple trust of the home that was awaiting her on the other side. He began to read intelligently and prayerfully the Bible which had been her parting gift, and what an awakening took place within him, as taught by the Spirit of God he gradually came to feel that everything was subservient to the settlement of the great question between conscience and the Creator of conscience—his conscience; and as that voice of God within him made itself be heard accusing him, pointing to the sins of his life,—his life, so spotless-looking in other eyes, so black now in his own,—the great central truth of Scripture—substitution—became supremely precious to his heart. To his surprise and joy, he found that 'what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.' Christ 'made sin for us,' 'made a curse for us,' became to him the

'one thing needful,' and from henceforth young Harry Egerton was a 'new creature in Christ Jesus.' The thoroughness of his character, so distinguishing a feature of him naturally, was no less remarkable in his renewed life, while his 'sanctified common sense' kept him from running to unseemly extremes. To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and, following in the same gracious lines, to be a good and brave soldier in his Queen's army, became henceforth the aim of his heart and life.

Meanwhile, Sir Everard, who had carefully ignored his brother and his family during the years of toil and struggle, found it, however, convenient, as they came to the front, to take a little condescending notice of them all. Harry's spontaneous feeling was to show himself proudly indifferent to such ungenerous conduct; but the peace-maker by his side brought other motives to bear upon him. An informal reconciliation took place—the past was left unchallenged, and Sir Everard patched up his remorseful conscience by taking considerable interest in his nephew's military education and career, fancifully deluding himself that young Harry's distinction was, in some way, attributable to his introductions and position.

All this time he was living a reckless, dissipated life. He retired from the army, and spent his time between superintending alterations at Kalme and plunging into the gaieties of a 'man of pleasure' in town. He squandered his money in betting and horse-racing, and retired periodically to the Continent to retrench, reappearing at the London season with a somewhat cracked character, indeed, but with recruited fortune. He had the *entrée* of the drawing-rooms of the upper ten, and scheming mothers flung their fairest daughters at his feet. He figured more than once in the Divorce Court, and had reached middle life before he seriously contemplated matrimony. At last he fell into the meshes of a designing mother at Baden. The Countess Flügen had come there, ostensibly for her daughter's health, but quite as much at least for the gratification of her own passion for gambling.

She had discovered and crushed an attachment of long

standing between Thérèse, her only child, and a young German officer. Thérèse drooped like a blighted lily, while the young soldier, in his grief and mortification, exchanged into a regiment under orders for foreign service, and a few months after tidings came of his having been killed in action. In her sweet and chastened beauty, Thérèse was more than ever attractive, though indifferent to the admiration she received. Her spirit seemed broken, and while her mother spent her days and nights at the gaming-table, she nursed her grief in solitude.

At this juncture, Sir Everard crossed her path. He met the Countess constantly at the Kürsaal, and one day when Thérèse came there,—the innocent victim of a preconcerted scheme,—to meet her mother, he was introduced to her, and became enamoured of her charms.

The Countess, regardless of the feelings of her child, urged on Sir Everard in his suit, satisfied that once she became the wife of this great English milord, all her *vapeurs* and *mélancolie* would disappear. She gave a highly-coloured but quite false statement of the antiquity of their family, while the reluctance, the ill-concealed repugnance, of poor Thérèse to the arrangement, only quickened Sir Everard's determination to have her for his wife. She was 'an angel of beauty,' he declared, and her spirit was so gentle that he felt sure she would never dare to disobey or disoblige him. Thérèse struggled feebly for her liberty, but all her opposition was overruled, and the dreadful marriage took place.

After a protracted tour in Switzerland, Sir Everard brought his bride to England, intending to show her off in the London season; but the admiration she everywhere attracted made him change. He was unprepared to suffer the jealousy with which his own share in the intrigues of London society had made him familiar, and he carried her to Kalme. On one point he had been firm; he would not allow her mother to join them there, to the great disappointment of the Countess, who had counted on sharing the honours of her fair daughter. Sir

Everard, however, was tired of her 'yammering German tongue and fawning ways,' and whatever his past promises to her had been, declined the honour of her company.

The 'rousing' which the Countess had assured Sir Everard would come to Thérèse's spirits after her marriage had not begun even to appear. When they reached Kalme, Sir Everard was growing weary of her apathy, but hoped much from the effect on her of the stately grandeur of Kalme, and the pride of her position there. His madly jealous disposition, however, rendered her already melancholy existence still more wretched. He upbraided her with her obstinate dulness, and threw the discovered shady status of her family in her teeth; left her alone, debarred her from mixing in society while he was absent, and really seemed bent on driving the young broken-hearted girl to despair. Her life at Kalme, under the felt *surveillance* of an upper servant, was dreary in the extreme. Kalme, in its castellated grandeur, its fine but gloomy grounds, and its terrible isolation, became to her a sort of living tomb. If she longed for anything, it was for the sunshine of her *Vaterland*, for the sound of her native tongue, for some drop of sympathetic love in her bitter cup.

Yet her husband expected her to be gay and brilliant, when, worn out with his life of pleasure in town, he chose to return to Kalme. But this he could not command. Her gilded chains cut into the vitals of her being, her heart died within her, she seemed to lose all interest in life.

Occasionally, during these sad months, young Egerton visited at his uncle's, and then the breach between them opened. Sir Everard's cruel conduct towards this defenceless young stranger—his own wife, too—roused his nephew's chivalrous indignation. He ventured to remonstrate respectfully but plainly with his uncle. There was no one to stand up for Lady Egerton. Her mother had died. She was alone in the world; her husband was now utterly tired of her, and had thrown off the thin mask which for a time veiled from her his true character.

Poor Lady Egerton revived when her one real friend appeared, much as the fading flower revives when a soft shower drops upon it. But with his departure, her depression deepened, and Sir Everard lost all control in his anger against her. His pride was wounded, his patience worn out, and he came to the unprincipled determination to be rid of his burden. He appeared suddenly at Kalme, after a protracted absence in London, and brought with him visitors of both sexes of more than doubtful reputation. A sudden rebound in Thérèse's spirit made it leap up at this insult, as the light of a lamp flickers before it dies out. Without a word of reproach, she refused to receive his guests. In his rage and surprise, he stormed at her, scorned her, told her he was tired of her, accused her of concealing her low origin, and ordered her to behave becomingly to his guests, or to leave his house.

Young Egerton was an involuntary witness of this scene, and his whole soul rose in pity and grief for the broken-hearted wife. As she glided from the room without a word, he could only seek out her own German maid, Gertchen,—a luxury which latterly, at his intercession, had been granted her,—and commit her mistress to her faithful care. Her apathy gave place to the wildest excitement; all day long she roamed about her apartments, and at midnight a tiny mortal was ushered into the world, while simultaneously the poor young mother drew her last sigh, and fled out of it to, we trust, a better home. Sir Everard heard the news outwardly unmoved. That his wife's death was a relief to him, others besides himself felt; but not from any word unguardedly uttered by him could the real state of this man's cruel heart be learned; probably his conscience was now so blunted that the pangs of remorse found no soft spot on which to fasten, and there was no room for repentance. He never asked to see the child; but when, some weeks after Lady Egerton's funeral, the offended nurse suddenly entered the library, where he and Egerton were sitting, with a little white bundle in her arms, and held it up in Sir Everard's face, he visibly recoiled from the sight. His rage that he should

have a son, an heir, in whose veins such plebeian blood as that of Thérèse flowed, was not soothed by the spectacle of one of the very plainest babies that ever showed face in the world. Small, nay shrivelled in form and features, its eyes had a frightful squint, while a quite unnecessary crop of reddish hair already bristled on the small head. It cried and moaned piteously, and when the officious nurse attempted to place him in Sir Everard's arms, he roared with a lustiness surprising from so tiny a pair of lungs!

'Take it away!' exclaimed Sir Everard, losing patience at last; then under his breath, 'Hideous, hateful!' and his heart steeled on the spot against the hapless intruder on his proud position.

'Just feel his weight, sir,' said Nurse Morrice, turning with well-controlled rage from Sir Everard to Egerton, who received the child quietly into his arms. The sobs ebbed away, and a glance from the poor, tearful eyes into Egerton's melted his heart. He bent his head over the little face, and a faint smile, like the ray of a winter setting sun, gleamed up into his, and bound his heart to the child.

Sir Everard sat buried in gloomy silence for long after the child was removed; then he started and exclaimed—

'Harry, do you think that th—at—thi—ng will live?'

'Live? yes.'

'*You* must hate it!'

'I? Oh dear no! I have quite taken to the little fellow.'

'Are you mad? You don't mean what you say. Mark me, that small monster shall never be recognised as my heir! I shall rid myself of it, and if you will help me to get it *out of my sight, out of my house,*—make it as though it never had been!' grinding his teeth, and clenching his fist,—'you shall be not only heir of my title, but of my possessions which I alone have the right to will away, lands—all'—

'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing,' exclaimed Egerton, drawing himself proudly up, 'and act a life-long lie?'

'You are a simple madman!' cried Sir Everard in uncon-

trollable rage. 'I shall have to manage my own affairs, then,' and he flung himself out of the room.

And manage his own affairs he did, how or by the help of whom Egerton did not know.

But soon Kalme was shut up, Sir Everard went abroad, and for many months Egerton, who went with his battery to India, heard nothing from him, and nothing of the hapless child. At last a rumour reached him that it had died in France.

On Egerton's return to England, his uncle, who was then in London, sent for him, and patched up a peace with him. He incidentally mentioned that the child was dead, but all Egerton's inquiries on the subject were met by stern silence, and somehow his heart painfully misgave him. Egerton had won fresh laurels in the East, where his bravery marked him as a hero, while his noble character, so full of humility and self-denial, adorned the Christianity he professed.

On one occasion when reconnoitring with a handful of men an important hill-pass,—which the enemy was preparing to dispute, —preparatory to planting their guns, he was surprised, while in advance of his men at a sharp turn, by a detachment from their ranks. So narrow was the defile that only one could occupy it at a time. But there he stood, and with his own hand struck down one after another of the fierce foes, till the pass, by his unaided bravery, was in possession of our troops, and the bloodshed, which a more organized attack would have entailed, was saved.

No wonder that Sir Everard was proud of his nephew, whom royalty itself delighted to honour; nor was it surprising that, in the presence of such a man, his mean spirit and guilty heart quailed.

Egerton had just left his uncle's hotel one winter's afternoon, when, hurrying along the slushy streets, he felt a light tap on his arm. Turning quickly round, he confronted a neatly dressed young woman, who glanced respectfully but most eagerly up into his face.

'Herr Egerton,' she said, 'may I speak one moment viz you?'

He looked at her, puzzled for a moment, then—'Ah, Gertchen, is it you!' he exclaimed, as Lady Egerton's German maid stood revealed in the lamp-light.

'I vant to tell you zometing; you must let me, please; vill you come viz me? We are in small rooms in a small street off here,' and she led the way off the thoroughfare, away into quieter, narrowing streets. Egerton followed with an anxious, doubtsome heart as to what he was to hear from this faithful creature. She threaded her way, going on before him, but every moment turning anxiously round to make sure he was there.

At last she stopped in front of a green-grocer's shop, an alley at the side of which ran into a close, dark court. 'Up here!' she said, as she flew into the first landing, and mounting a long stair, stopped at last, breathless, at a door. Gently applying a key, she opened it, and Egerton followed her into —darkness. The tiniest fire burned on the hearth, but she stirred it into a flame, and lit a candle.

'Come!' to Egerton, as she noiselessly opened a door into another room, and held the candle over a sleeping child.

Egerton started. Thérèse's little boy lay on a small, hard bed, as soundly and peacefully asleep as if surrounded and sheltered by the luxuries of love.

'How well he looks, Gertchen!' said Egerton, bending tenderly over the little man; 'you have taken good care of him.'

'Have not I!' she answered, well pleased; 'over too much good care as some on' thinks.' And then by the side of the sleeping child she told him the story of his life since they parted.

The nurse Morrice was largely bribed by Sir Everard to 'take the child away.' The full significance of the words she understood, and she carried him to a small village in Normandy. Gertchen, whose heart clung to the child, and whose suspicions were painfully aroused, followed them and secreted herself in the village, resolved to watch Morrice's

movements with the child. After a time, she was startled by seeing the child begin to droop, and by the evident fact of Morrice giving it less and less nourishment; she recalled dreadful stories she had heard, and knowing how matters had been between Sir Everard and Lady Egerton, and his hatred of the child, she took serious alarm. Her senses were quickened — she became painfully on the alert. Morrice drank, but amid all the horror of its situation the child lived on, and seemed as if it meant to live! Things, however, were brought to a crisis by Gertchen hearing, on the occasion of one of her visits to the *étage* in which Morrice lived, the child cry piteously. Regardless of consequences, she rushed into the room just in time to see Morrice with a bottle of laudanum at the child's lips.

'One thousand pounds,' Morrice was muttering, as if to brace herself to do the foul deed,—'one thousand pounds when—dead—ah!'—

But a firm hand seized the arm stretched out to do the murderous act, and flinging her to the ground, Gertchen snatched up the child, and fled out of the room.

Terror seized Morrice, and putting the deadly phial to her own lips, she fell into her last sleep!

Gertchen carried the child to a neighbour's house, and returned to meet, as she expected, Morrice's revengeful rage. After waiting and listening till the long shadows deepened in the narrow street, and the stillness of evening stole around, she opened the door to find Morrice—dead!

Gertchen, left alone, surveyed her situation, and made up her mind to return to England and seek out Captain Egerton. He was the one star in her dark night.

Arrived in London, she went to his club, and was almost stunned by the tidings she there got, that he was abroad, and had left no address, this last being improvised by the porter to save the woman 'bothering by coming.'

Gertchen feared to discover herself and the child to Sir Everard.

Among the pages of Morrice's Bible she had found, after her death, a letter addressed to Sir Everard, telling him the child was dead, and claiming the promised bribe. That letter she retained; but fearing further plots should Sir Everard come to know the child still lived, she secreted herself and him in these poor rooms, sewing for shops for their support, and spending any leisure moments in the vicinity of the club, where she knew Captain Egerton would be when he returned. Her persevering watching was this day at last rewarded—the object of her life was accomplished. In his hands she felt all would come right with her boy.

'Sir Everard believes Anton is dead,' said Egerton, as Gertchen finished her tale. 'He has just been telling me so.'

'*Hopes* he is, but he can*not* belief nor know for an ascertainment. This letter did never come!' She placed it in Egerton's hands.

'I hif slept viz it underbeneath ob my pill—o—und have carri—ed it in much anxiousness, und now—ach, now it is safe!'

'I shall at once let Sir Everard know he is alive,' said Egerton as he rose to go. 'Trust me, Gertchen, to do everything for Anton's good.'

'I trust you for all!' was her simple reply.

'And you must get things to make you both more comfortable,' he added, as he placed some money in her hand. 'You are a devoted and faithful friend, and now you must take care of yourself as well as of poor little Anton.' Egerton would willingly have met and fought an enemy rather than have approached his uncle on the subject of his child, but it was his plain duty, and he went straight at it. Sir Everard's rage was terrible; he anathematized Egerton as a disturber of his peace, and a spy in his affairs, and in fierce language vowed he would revenge himself upon him. He subsequently affected to believe that his nephew was the victim of a hoax; but when Egerton produced a photograph of little Anton, with the unmistakeable squint, Sir Everard could not gainsay the fact of its identity, though he refused to admit it.

'I have cast him off; I disown him utterly; I will have nothing to do with him—nothing; he is to me as dead; he *is* dead' (losing all patience); 'his name is on the memorial-stone in the vault at Kalme. For mercy's sake, don't unearth him; for your own sake, leave him in his grave!'

Egerton waited till Sir Everard's rage had spent itself, then said, 'You do not believe that, sir, and you are bound to own and provide for your child.'

Suddenly the thought came to Sir Everard that, by refusing to pay for the child, he should strengthen his position in his professed belief of its death; also that, if Egerton thought of undertaking its support, he would tire of the privilege, and be 'starved into surrendering,' so he answered, 'I shall never pay one penny. I repeat my ultimatum: tell me that the child is dead, and you are my heir; persevere in your mad folly, take one step to make this confounded business known, and I shall manage to—ruin you.'

It was to Egerton a quite unintelligible threat, but he could not make his uncle listen to him. He might have threatened to bring the matter into court, and to compel Sir Everard to take the custody of the child, but there were obvious difficulties in the way, if Sir Everard persisted in disowning it. It had been given out that the child was dead; few at home had seen it, fewer still would recognise it. Sir Everard reigned despotic at Kalme, and his all but omnipotent golden bribe could coin lies or cancel truth at will. Besides, he was under orders again for foreign service.

'I tell you, Harry,' Sir Everard said once more, adroitly changing his tactics, 'if you make this business known, you will break my heart. I have been ill, and am far from in my usual health, and such a public disgrace will send me to my grave.'

'Disgrace!' exclaimed Egerton; 'there is no possible dis'—

'You have plebeian blood in your own veins, Harry,' interrupted the old man with insolent scorn; 'you can't *understand* what wounded pride is. Why, our family boasts centuries of

aristocratic lineage; and to have myself deceived by that woman into marrying the daughter of a low German'—

'Lady Egerton graced your position, sir,' said Harry, breaking in; 'I care not whence she came, she was a pure, beautiful, noble woman!' and his voice quivered as he recalled her mournful life and her premature death.

'Aha! you are her squire still. You were always too *prononcé* in your devotion to her; so others as well as myself thought!' with a sneer.

'Sir!' with a look which made the old man quail.

'Spare your righteous indignation—reserve it, at least; you may want it all for another time. Meanwhile, pity your kinsman; don't bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.'

Egerton looked at his uncle, grown old from his fast life before his time. Bring *him* to the grave whom he longed to serve and to lead into the path of life! ah no! and his mouth, though he did not say so, was for the present, on the sore subject, stopped.

He determined to take on himself the entire charge of the child, and to have him educated in a manner befitting his real rank and prospects, cherishing the strong hope that one day Sir Everard would be proud of the son of whom he now laboured to rid himself. In his honourable integrity he kept his strange secret to himself.

Egerton's first step was to remove Gertchen and little Anton from the unwholesome court in which they were, and to place them in nice apartments at Brixton, arranging with his lawyer to pay Gertchen a fixed and liberal sum. A very successful operation on the child's eyes was a source of great joy to Egerton, and the change upon Anton's appearance was incredible.

In due time Egerton sent him to a first-class school; and always when in England managed to get leave when Anton's holidays came round, and had him to spend them all with him. What happy days these were for the boy! what stores of information he got! what riding and boating they had! and

how carefully he was instructed in those spiritual truths which were the support and sweetness of Egerton's own life.

Gertchen got a situation in Paris, but every now and then during the holidays crossed the Channel to refresh herself with a sight of her '*knabe*.' He had just entered his teens when our tale begins, and had developed into a fine manly boy, of frank and open disposition, with quick perceptions and great aptitude for learning.

Egerton saw little of his uncle during these years, but was invariably, if within reach, sent for in times of illness, or when business matters harassed him. For the first time since Anton's return to England, Egerton had spent his leave alone in Scotland with the Morells, where events so deeply affecting himself had transpired.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'I charge thee, fling away ambition.
By that sin fell the angels; how can man, then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?'

MRS. HEYWOOD and Rose settled themselves in their accustomed *pension* in Paris,—'in the Champs Elysées,' they described it. More strictly speaking, it was a few streets off, and though rather important-looking, was but a second-rate house.

The Chevalier Jacqueline and his wife, sort of hundredth cousins of theirs, who lived in the Avenue de ——, near the *pension*, and who were in the forefront of fashionable Parisian society, took kindly notice of their 'poor Scotch cousins.' Madame lent them her victoria and ponies for particular visits, and allowed them to refer themselves to the Avenue address as theirs when desirable.

Two days after their arrival, Mrs. Heywood borrowed the victoria, and drove, accompanied by Rose, to Sir Everard Egerton's hotel in the beautiful Bois de Boulogne. Alighting in the court at the foot of the staircase, they were informed by the *portier* that '*Sir Everard avait la santé assez bien rétablie*,' and was '*chez lui*.'

They ascended, and a servant having ushered them through a handsome corridor into a *salon*, left them to carry their names to his master. The room was furnished *à Louis treize*, with its polished floor, soft hangings, and white-wood furniture; with shining mirrors reflecting each other, gilt timepieces and candelabra, superb china ornaments, and the most beautiful

plants and flowers in profusion about the room. Warmth and luxury reigned.

Presently Sir Everard entered. Mrs. Heywood introduced herself and Rose as friends of Captain Egerton, and explained how she had promised, on her word of honour, to place the cherished clock in his own hands, and none but his. She had come simply to fulfil her promise, and she delivered up most gracefully her precious consignment. Sir Everard was meanwhile calculating how much of friends these two beautiful women were to his nephew. They were too gay and fanciful in their 'get-up,' he concluded, to be exactly of his 'style.' A leading question would decide.

After thanking them in courtier fashion for their 'unspeakable courtesy' in burdening themselves with such a troublesome '*pacquet*,' he said jauntily, but with a strong dash of sarcasm in his tone, 'And how *is* Mr. Puritan?'

'Ah!' catching up the whole situation, 'he is—he seems well. We are, however, but friends of yesterday; I fear we can tell you little news of him.'

'The less the better,' muttered Sir Everard, almost involuntarily but audibly.

'He has been up in Scotland on leave, and thinks his battery will probably be ordered to Africa or the West Indies.'

'Ah!' with a look of relief on his handsome face.

'But really we know very little of him, and we must not detain you,' rising as if to go.

'Pray favour me with a few minutes longer,' said Sir Everard. 'Are you ladies to be in Paris some time?' glancing towards Rose.

'We have only just come, and it depends on my mother's health a good deal,' said Rose naïvely, 'how long we remain. We are *en route* for Rome or Switzerland.'

'How curious!' said Sir Everard; 'it is the same with me. I have been detained here by illness from proceeding to Rome, but I am grateful for the detention, which gives me

the pleasure of making your acquaintance, ladies,' and he bowed towards them in courtly style.

'Do you play billiards?' he added. 'We have a fairish table, and as I am deterred yet from going out after sunfall, many of my friends come in the afternoon for billiards and music.'

'I just know the game a little,' said Rose, 'but I am most anxious to improve.'

'Honour me by joining us, pray.'

'The ponies will resent our keeping them standing so long,' said Mrs. Heywood, with her usual tact, appearing to hold back from what she was longing to plunge into.

'Ah, well,' glancing at a timepiece, 'give them a turn round the Bois, and come back here. It will be a real charity to your countryman. I get tired—upon my honour I do—of the yammering French tongues for ever about me.'

'Oh, be joyful!' exclaimed Rose, as they drove away. 'What a godsend that clock was! You have managed well, mother. We have got the *entrée* into the jolliest house, I believe, in Paris. Madame Jacqueline told me that the old fogey is a millionaire, and that all the ladies are setting their caps at him. Sha'n't we be up a peg with her when she hears we are so immediately asked to visit him!'

'There is evidently not much love lost between him and his nephew,' said Mrs. Heywood. 'I wonder exactly what the coolness is about.'

'Captain Egerton was very anxious about his illness,' said Rose.

'Naturally; why, he succeeds Sir Everard.'

'That's his anxiety!'

'Of course. You didn't suppose he wanted him to get well, did you?'

'Really, I did; he looked so cut up about him, and said he was arranging to come over should his uncle send for him. How I wish he would!' Rose added heartily.

'You may save yourself the trouble of any such wishes. If ever man loved woman, Captain Egerton does Gerty.'

An evil scowl darkened Rose's face. She bit her lip till the blood started, but did not speak.

'Besides,' continued her mother, anxious to mollify her offended daughter, 'what would you really get in getting him? It turns out, from Mrs. Pierce, that he has very little patrimony. Lady Morell makes such jumbles about people. You know what an officer's pay is, and he has some poor relative or other whom he supports.'

Rose felt in her heart of hearts that Egerton and his pay would be a richer prize than any other man with his hundreds of thousands. Ambition, however, clamoured for wealth, and position, and power; but her comparisons were presently cut short as again the victoria stopped at Sir Everard's door.

A very befrizzled and befrilled dowager, Madame le Blanc, a convenient 'cousin' of Sir Everard's, acted on such occasions as hostess, and greatly enjoyed the post of honour. To her Mrs. Heywood and Rose were presented by Sir Everard, who felt proud of his countrywomen, and in the course of the afternoon devoted himself much more exclusively to Rose than was at all agreeable to his other lady guests.

'Do you play chess?' Sir Everard asked Rose, as they sipped their coffee.

She observed he did not join in billiards.

'I scarcely know it,' she answered.

'It suits me better than the table since my late illness,' Sir Everard went on to explain. 'The doctor says I must creep before I walk, and that I will be all the sooner well.'

'I should much like to improve,' said Rose, as she glanced at a chessboard. 'I have almost forgotten the moves.'

'Let me refresh your memory,' said Sir Everard, drawing a small table before them, and placing the men.

The lively rattle of the French ladies, as they laughed and chattered with the gentlemen, was distracting enough, but Rose held steadily at her little game. Mrs. Heywood meanwhile threw out her baited lines to some of the ladies of rank, fascinating them with her charming manners, talking of Sir

Everard as an 'old friend,' and of her thankfulness at finding him so much better, mentioning incidentally her cousins Jacqueline, and in the most *dégagé* manner showing herself *en rapport* with gay Parisian society. Several of the ladies asked leave to call upon her at the Avenue, and expressed themselves as *ravies* to have made her acquaintance and that of her beautiful daughter.

In the intervals of Sir Everard's frequent relapses of illness, he held his *matinées*, to which his new English friends were always invited, Rose's real attraction to his hotel being the hope of meeting Captain Egerton on any chance visit he might pay to Paris.

While often talking of leaving, they stayed on; and while they were 'resolving and re-resolving,' Christmas arrived, bringing with it a few incidents materially affecting Rose. The one most full of interest was the coming of Captain Egerton. His battery was again under orders for foreign service, and he came to see his uncle before leaving. They met frequently, and the uncontrolled love and enthusiasm of her heart for Egerton grew and intensified. He was the hero of the English society then in Paris. Ladies dilated on his bravery and his splendid bearing and manners, while the men were proud of him, and predicted for him a yet more brilliant career. His modesty and unconsciousness formed a rare setting for such attractions. Besides, he was heir to his uncle's title, and no doubt to his estates as well. In him became concentrated the love and ambition of Rose's heart. He was besieged with invitations; and Rose's heart beat enviously when she fancied any one of her sex found favour in his eyes. But this was not often the case. While courteous to all, he kept himself aloof from marked attentions, and his independence and indifference to the court paid him only increased the eagerness with which he was sought after; a man *sans peur et sans reproche* was the universal verdict passed upon him.

'Captain Egerton seems to have a great drawing towards the halt and maimed,' said a lady one evening to Rose, as they sat together at a *soirée musicale* at the English ambassador's.

Rose had come determined to make some way in his affections to-night. The days were hurrying past, alas! too swiftly for her, and she chafed under his coldness.

'If ever you want to find him,' the lady rattled on, 'look in some back corner, and you will see him explaining photographs to a neglected woman of sixty, perhaps, or shouting into some deaf creature's ear the outline of Tennyson's latest poem. He has the patience of Job. I declare, it makes one wish they were blind or lame, to be the object of his interest. Every woman here to-night is dying, I suppose, to have him talk to her.'

Rose, while thankful that this was the particular class to which in Paris he seemed partial, was angry that he made no exception in her case, and so seldom sought her out; still she persisted in assuring herself that he admired and cared for her. She chatted gaily to the gentlemen who hovered round her, and at last, losing temper and patience at the apparent hopelessness of seeing Egerton at all, she asked the Chevalier Picton to take her to see a statuette of the Prince Imperial, which she knew was in the recess where Egerton was in earnest talk with a very intelligent-looking but hump-backed lady.

He did not observe her as, radiant in the flush of her gay evening dress, and leaning on the Chevalier's arm, she stood at last behind him. Having examined the statuette, she got hold of an album, and seating herself with the Chevalier by her side, began turning over the pages, not looking at the pictures, however, but listening to the conversation between Egerton and his companion. Miss Toinby was a sculptor of rising note, intelligent and intellectual, but hazy and unsettled in her religious views. What a fine face hers was, with its chiselled features and expression varying with her emotions! and how it kept lighting up as she talked to Egerton and listened to his conversation. Her deformity of figure was terrible, and she felt it keenly. Many a time Rose had swept past her on such occasions as the present, as she sat perhaps solitary, or listening to the garrulous talk of some old 'wall-flower' who found it pleasanter to chat with

her than to sit silent alone. Egerton had no martyr-look about him as he sat on and on with her. It seemed as great a pleasure to himself as to the talented woman he was cheering.

'Another of my beliefs is in the triumph of habit,' he was saying as the eavesdropper glided into her seat. 'Butler says, "Acts make habits, and habits make character, and character is the man." We have the making of ourselves very much in our own hands. As long as that beautiful figure of yours which I saw in your studio to-day was in plaster-of-Paris, in the first stages of its formation, you moulded it as you pleased, gave prominence to this feature, threw more into the shade that other, smoothed away hard lines, brought out others more conspicuously, and over and over again you went in your moulding-work till, satisfied, you transferred your image to the pure, permanent marble.'

'Over and over, indeed,' remarked the little lady.

'True genius,' said Egerton, smiling, 'that over and over again.'

'Many a dark, gloomy hour I have spent over it,' said Miss Toinby.

'The flowers in sunshine gathered soonest fade,' said Egerton cheerfully; 'but besides the gift to your fellow-creatures of such a beautiful work of art, think of the benefit to yourself of these habits of perseverance.'

'Ah, but how much better the inborn genius which some have!'

'Possibly, but at any rate ordinary talent with perseverance may reach the same platform with genius.'

'Then the temperament, the character, is so different in different persons. The indolent, inert man can't help himself; it's his temperament, his character.'

'Do not confuse the two,' said Egerton eagerly; 'temperament and character are quite distinct. Temperament is something that, in one sense, we can't help. I have no more to do with my temperament than with the colour of my skin. If

my temperament is like gunpowder,—pardon the warlike illustration,—it only needs the match of temptation to be applied to make it blaze up. Its fire and passion are till then latent, perhaps unknown. Your temperament, on the other hand, may be one of hidden sweetness, like those flowers with scent which only when they are beaten exhale their delicious perfume. Yet this temperament is, so to speak, the raw material put into our hands by God. We are here to make the best of it. Our characters will be the outcome of what God and ourselves make them.'

'It's weary work,' said Miss Toinby sadly, 'so much depends on the motive.'

'Everything.'

'Now tell me, for my help, Captain Egerton, what is your reward for all your self-denying habits, your battling with all that is sinful in *your* temperament, your persevering work? Do you not find that as soon as you have got over one peak of difficulty, you are face to face with another?'

'Certainly.'

'Well, where is the difference between one actuated by your beliefs,' they had been talking of these before Rose slunk down behind them, 'and one who, with no belief except in blind fate, lives out his dismal days?'

'It enables me to bear my burden to-day, and to do better to-morrow,' said Egerton with deep pathos in his voice. 'A further precept is the reward of a fulfilled precept:

> "My God rewards deeds done
> By nobler deeds to do."'

A light of intelligence flashed in Miss Toinby's eyes.

This was new doctrine, new motive power for life and endurance of its ills. The religion that could inspire such a spirit as plainly actuated this man looked divine. She would inquire into, search into it. Ah, if it could give her such aspirations, such stimulus, how changed, how full of meaning and power might even her life be!

'And,' said Egerton after a pause, 'some day our troubles

will be over, we shall have reached the highest peak. I remember an interesting experience some of us had in Switzerland. It is usual, as you know, when a traveller is ascending a mountain, to find, to his disappointment, when he has reached what he hoped was the highest point, that peak upon peak still rises far above him. I and a friend had, however, on one occasion, when ascending Mont Blanc, a quite different experience. We took two days to do it, often slipping backwards on the ice two steps for every one we went forward, turning giddy as we looked down, then resolutely lifting our eyes upwards and toiling on. On reaching a certain summit, far off still, as we believed, from the highest height, what was our surprise to find ourselves at the top! The beautiful plateau lay stretched out serenely at our feet; the calm, clear sky smiled over us, undimmed by any towering peak; our toil was over; the summit of our ambition was unexpectedly reached!

'So with life. The pilgrim goes travelling on, encouraged by looking back on difficulties overcome, often burdened by the prospect of many more to be met; some day, suddenly he finds it is all over, he has reached his goal.'

'Whatever it is that he has,' thought Rose as the conversation ended, 'it makes him too independent of things here; of me, at least, it must not, shall not be.' Presently, however, a new bias to her meditations on the subject was given by the approach towards him of a lady and gentleman who expressed their surprise and pleasure at seeing him.

'Ah! Talbot!' he exclaimed, 'you here, and Mrs. Talbot!' shaking hands heartily with both. Professor Talbot and Egerton are friends, and though often separated by time and space, their meetings, when they do occur, are characterized by warmth of affection and sympathy, a warmth which makes long intervals to be forgotten in the delightsomeness of present intercourse.

Rose had by this time, on the plea of heat, ensconced herself with her companion behind a screen, but within ear-shot of Egerton and his friends.

'What are you busy with?' asked Egerton after a chat about past events.

'Ah! I have come over during the recess to see one or two men here, and get hold of some of their books for my *magnum opus*.'

'The old story!' said Mrs. Talbot, laughing; 'all work and no play.'

'And you, Egerton?'

'Oh, I've been hard at work as usual with languages, and going over some of the ancient classics and poets.'

'Historians and theologians, and what not!' interrupted the Professor, 'together with forming soldiers' institutes and savings-banks. You are a simple marvel, Egerton; you do the work of half-a-dozen of us, and seem to have Joshua's power to make the sun stand still till you get it done!'

'And,' said Mrs. Talbot kindly, 'doing your own appointed work as Joshua did, you are in the same sure line of promotion when the time—*His* time—comes.'

Egerton looked gratefully at Mrs. Talbot, but did not speak.

'And you have been in Lonshire, Egerton?' said the Professor presently. 'Did you come heart-whole out from among all the beautiful girls there?'

Rose held her breath to catch his answer.

'I never came across such a galaxy as when we last visited the Morells,' the Professor went on without waiting for Egerton to answer. 'The Morell girls, splendid creatures to look at; unintellectual, however, and rather horsey. And their cousin—Geraldine — Genevive — no—no!'—

'Gertrude,' interrupted his wife, laughing.

'Ah yes! Gertrude. What a beauty, and such fun! She kept Jack and Bruce on the trot after her, and yet she never flung a civil word to either of them. The most transparent, bewitching girl I ever came across, present company, of course, always excepted, my dear,' in a stage whisper to his wife.

'I simply loved that girl,' said Mrs. Talbot heartily, 'there

was so much that was warm-hearted and womanly about her. And is she not lovely, Captain Egerton?'

'The most beautiful woman I ever saw,' said Egerton.

Thump, thump went Rose's heart behind the screen.

'And she's such a student too,' the Professor went on. 'Do you remember, Edith,' appealing to his wife, 'one day when a party of us at the Fort had been puzzling over in which book of the Bible the words, 'He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' were? We had been airing our views respecting it, turning up this Prophet and the other, with no effect whatever. When you and she came in, we stated our difficulty, and Gertrude instantly said, "It's not in the Bible at all; it's in one of Sterne's works;" and taking down the volume, she turned straight to the passage. She had your friends, the Ancient Classics, Egerton, at her finger ends too, and read Dante in its beautiful original, ditto Goethe and Schiller in their harsher tongue.'

'And,' said Mrs. Talbot, 'with all her knowledge and accomplishments, no more of a blue-stocking than one of the wives or daughters of the Violet Queen herself.'

'The Colonel is one of her Violet Majesty's veritable subjects, however,' said the Professor, 'so far as his requirements of women are concerned,—for instance, to be keepers at home, and diligent in the management of their house and larder! He reminded me of Pericles and Socrates, he could appreciate female accomplishments in an Aspasia or a Theodita; but, for his own luxury, give him a daughter as well trained and employed as an Ischomachos.'

'The cookery-books were more than she could stand sometimes,' said Mrs. Talbot, smiling at the recollection of Gertrude's culinary trials.

'You don't hold, I hope, Egerton,' said the Professor, 'that life is a cup too small to hold love in! Which of the Classics have you been brooding over? Some of the women-haters, I presume, that you are still *solus* in the journey of life. Are you seared by Dante's Gemma or Milton's Mary Powell, or the

two noisy vixens Euripides successively had? Turn from such, my friend!' with a mock dramatic wave of his hand,—'turn from all such specimens of ancient domestic disappointment to the home bliss of modern philosophers, as experienced by your humble servant and his adoring partner,' bowing towards his wife. They all laughed.

'There was a talk,' said the Professor presently, 'that Miss Ellerslie was to marry Jack Morell. *That* she never will,—a little ape like him!'

'Never!' said Mrs. Talbot emphatically; 'it was plain enough the heads of both families wanted that, but Gertrude! she couldn't bear him.'

'But why doesn't she marry some one else, then?' persisted the Professor; 'she's getting on in her twenties.'

'Her father is so particular,' Mrs. Talbot replied, 'so resolved to have her settled near him, and so set upon the Honourable Jack for a son-in-law, that, if he can help it, she'll never marry any other. She'd be settled next door, too, you know, and in great affluence.'

'She'll live and die a spinster, then,' said the Professor. 'She'll never marry Jack Morell! Shall you see any of them again before you start, Egerton?'

'We leave Woolwich in ten days, and I have business here which will detain me some days yet.'

'How long do you expect to be away this time?' asked Mrs. Talbot.

'Three or four years, possibly more.'

Rose's heart, behind the screen, beat fast.

'You will be coming home with fresh laurels,' said the Professor kindly, 'like Randal in the song—

> "Wi' a ribbon at your breast, and a Sir to your name."'

'But then, you know—

> "Wi' grey, grey locks did Sir Randal come hame,"'

interrupted Egerton, laughing.

'To marry surely then,' said Mrs. Talbot. 'If only Ger-

trude were then still Miss Ellerslie, wouldn't I be a match-maker for once in my life!'

'Gertrude? Bless you!' said the Professor, 'she'll be a staid, sober matron by that time. But,' as if on second thoughts, 'she's just the sort of girl to wait a lifetime for the fellow she liked.'

A little pause ensued, when suddenly the Professor exclaimed, 'There was one of the fair maids of Lonshire whom I would place in this ancient gallery of female pictures we have been discussing. Fair is the name she bears—a Rose indeed, but a desperate briery one. Did you see her? Of course you would,' addressing Egerton. 'She has the face of a goddess, but the heart of a'—

'Certainly, the poison of asps is under Miss Heywood's tongue,' interrupted Mrs. Talbot. 'I saw her in Paris the other day. Does her mother reside here now?'

'They are only here *en route* to Switzerland, I believe,' said Egerton.

'*En route* to all the most atrocious, wasp-stinging, scandal-mongering places on the face of the earth, you may be sure,' said the Professor, who had keenly studied Rose during his visits into Lonshire, and had been disgusted with her words and ways. 'Take my advice, Egerton, whatever other flowers you may cherish, *gare la rose!*'[1]

'Jerry took the most inveterate dislike to that girl,' said Mrs. Talbot. 'But she has had disadvantages—not been

[1] '*Gare la rose*,' the motto on the crest of the Duc de la Rosière. This was its origin:—During the time of Catharine de Medicis one of the ancestral Ducs de la Rosière was enamoured of a certain fair French girl, lady-in-waiting to the young bride Marie, Queen of Scots. He therefore avoided rather than reciprocated the smiles of a beautiful dark-eyed Italian who loved him passionately. On the night of a ball Francesca entered, dressed in white satin, and holding in her hand two lovely crimson rosebuds. Her eye wandered round the room in search of the duke, whom presently she saw bending over the fair girl whom she hated. The duke was called away by a friend, having whispered to Isabella his promise of a speedy return. Francesca's opportunity had come; she stepped up to her, and separating, as she spoke, the two roses, put one into her own dress, while she gracefully offered the other to her rival.

sheltered like my pet Gertrude—brought too much forward; and she *is* handsome, is she not?'

'Decidedly, and has a good deal of character,' said Egerton. Rose's heart, behind the screen, gave a sudden leap. 'If'—

'By the way,' interrupted Mrs. Talbot in a hushed tone, as her husband turned to speak to Miss Toinby, 'do you know, Captain Egerton, that my ardent longings for Miss Ellerslie have been realized? By my last letter from Miss Maitland I learn that Gertrude has really, she believes, undergone the gracious change.'

Egerton did not speak, but fixed his eyes intently on Mrs. Talbot, who went on, 'Is it not good news? I am grieved that Miss Maitland is not at home, for Gertrude's sake, poor dear. She was obliged to go to Cannes for the winter, and is *very* delicate, I fear. I have no doubt she has been a chief means of the happy change. She is such a bright, beautiful Christian character.'

'Beautiful indeed,' said Egerton, who longed for Mrs. Talbot to go on; but the Professor suddenly broke in with—

'Where are you bound for next—India?'

'Jamaica.'

'Ah! your people won't like that.'

'I have few to mind it,' said Egerton sadly.

'I like that,' said the Professor, annoyed with himself for his reckless words. 'No man living has more friends, nor more adorers among the fair sex too. Any one of them would risk yellow fever and tornadoes to share your fortunes with you.'

Surprised, but pleased, Isabella accepted the gift, and placed it without smelling it in her dress. Francesca, knowing that even there the poison would slowly work its way up to her brain, left her and joined the dance. She watched the duke return, saw him admire the rose, and evidently ask Isabella to exchange it with him for the white bud he wore in his coat. Just as he was lifting it to his lips a woman's figure stood before him, and a woman's agonized voice exclaimed, in tones which thrilled through the hall, '*Gare la rose!*' Then the whole awful truth flashed home upon the duke, and but for the intercession of the gentle Isabella, Francesca would have been punished without mercy.—See *Eugénie*, pp. 189, 193.

'Nay, nay,' said Egerton, smiling sadly, as others joined them, and the conversation changed.

'I am terribly hot,' said Rose presently to the Chevalier. 'Could we get some ice?'

'You are as white as a lily, Mademoiselle!' exclaimed the Chevalier, offering her his arm. 'It is these Indian Famine phot—og—raphs! You have the heart, ah! too sensitive,—you have dwell—ed over them by so much too long. I blame to myself exceedingly for my unthinkingness, but you seemed so rivetted upon them.'

They moved to the refreshment room, but Rose's excitement made her restless.

'I must seek my mother now,' she said. 'I want to hear the music.'

'To put those fam—eeshed faces out of your great soul,' persisted the Chevalier, who found his fair companion, to say the least, somewhat *distraite* this evening.

'Have you seen Captain Egerton?' Rose asked of her mother on resuming her seat beside Mrs. Heywood.

'No; he is always so surrounded by people it is impossible to get a word with him.'

Rose made a rapid *resumé* in her mind of the result of her eavesdropping. The Professor and his warning, forsooth—ah! if only *she* had a poisoned rose, wouldn't she present it to him as a just revenge for his spiteful words of her! They were impudent words,—false, of course; but spoken in *his* ear, ah, how terrible! And he—had he not pronounced her beautiful, full of fine character?—she dipped her brush in the rosiest colour,—and was he not solitary and sad, too shy to declare his love to her, and therefore keeping away from her in his self-denying way, with the modesty of his noble nature, thinking no one cared for him? And *she* was dying for him.

At this juncture in her thoughts Egerton himself appeared. Every other man shrivelled into insignificance before him. He was evidently looking for some one. At last his eye fell on her as she sat with her mother in the centre of a little group

of chattering Frenchmen. Her heart beat violently as he approached them and said—

'Ah! you are here. I am glad to have found you. Lady Beaton wishes you to hear Mademoiselle Fournier sing. You can't hear her properly in this room. Won't you come,' glancing at Mrs. Heywood, 'into the music-room? She is an orphan, a most deserving creature, and she means to give lessons this season in Paris. Perhaps you would recommend her.'

This was all! Some object of charity to be advanced! Still it was better than nothing, and she would use her opportunity.

'Can it be possible,' she said in a soft, low tone, 'that Professor and Mrs. Talbot are here to-night? I thought I saw them a minute ago.'

'Yes, they are here,' looking about for seats.

'How clever he is!'

'Very.'

'But *so* spiteful. I innocently offended him once at the Hall. Little Bevil Yorke Ewing asked his mother what he might have at tea, and she said, almost without thinking, "Nothing." He exclaimed, "Mother, what are you thinking of?" and she as absently said, "Nothing." So the child went about asking everybody what "nothing" was. Professor Talbot said, "It is a footless stocking without a leg," and because I said I had heard that before—he was passing it off as original, of course, and everybody was applauding it—he took a violent hatred to me, and vowed he would come, like Don Kamino, and dance with me on my wedding night. Wasn't it unkind, Captain Egerton?'

'There must have been some mistake,' said Egerton. 'Talbot is a generous man.'

'Perhaps because I have no brother, Captain Egerton,' in a plaintive tone, 'people say rude things; no one to take my part. I wonder if you ever want a sister as much as I do a brother?'

She fixed her eyes in their brilliancy upon him. His face flushed as he answered—

'Ah! don't I—just yearn for it!' and he thought of his sweet sister in heaven.

Rose misconstrued his meaning, in her vanity interpreting it to her own advantage, and just then Mademoiselle Fournier began to sing. Rose evinced the deepest interest in the young vocalist, and begged to be introduced to her at the close of the performance, promising her interest for 'the charming singer.'

Egerton was grateful for her friendliness, and felt more than usually compassionate towards her.

'It is quite true about Miss Ellerslie,' she remarked, as he wrapped her cloak round her at parting.

'Miss Ellerslie?' with sudden animation.

'Gertrude; yes. Good-night!' and she was gone.

She found awaiting her in the *pension* a letter from Fred, announcing his visit to Paris; not to see the fair city, with all its charms, but to see her whose image filled his soul. This visit had been, as Rose expressed it, 'a long threat.' Had there been time to write and put him off, on some extemporized pretext, she would have done so; but he would be here the following morning. With so many other persons and things to fill her head, and with such an absorbing passion especially as that which now filled her heart, Rose had all but forgotten the very existence of Fred Ellerslie, and his coming at this particular juncture was most inopportune. She was, it is true, tacitly engaged to him, without having committed herself in actual words, and how to rid herself of him without breaking with the Ellerslie family was a difficulty. That she should 'manage it' she did not doubt, but it would take more time and trouble than at present she could well spare.

And come, poor man, next morning, he did; and as with lover-like impatience he waited in the *salon* of the *pension* for her coming, his heart beat wildly with his happiness. Presently Mrs. Heywood entered, followed by Rose. They expressed their joy at seeing him, and made many inquiries after home friends.

Then he asked Rose to come and show him some of her

favourite sights. It was a clear, crisp day; but Rose excused herself, saying she scarcely ever ventured out in the morning, never till the sun was well up.

'Are you ill, Rose?' he asked anxiously, thinking at the same time that he had never seen her look more fresh and lovely.

'Not ill,' she answered languidly; 'but this sudden cold affects my throat, and mother says I must be careful.'

'I'll come back, then, when the sun is up.'

'Do,' said Mrs. Heywood. And Fred, after 'hanging on,' as Rose expressed it, 'in the most exasperating manner for a full hour,' took his departure.

His eyes were blinded. He saw no coldness, dreamt of none, and felt only the spell of love and beauty as he walked out into the clear, pure air, hopeful and happy. His was a long and loyal attachment, reaching back to playmate days, when he crowned her 'Queen of May' in the Fort garden, on to the proud moment when, radiant in the excitement of her first ball, she gave him her first dance, and made him, as he that night assured her, 'happy for life.' Anxious for her sake to make haste to be rich, he, contrary to his father's wishes, left college, and embarked in a scientific expedition round the world, hoping it might lead to some permanent post of honour, the sooner to be able to offer Rose a home. The voyage and the work were arduous, and his health suffered so much that the repetition of any such enterprise was deemed unsafe, and no 'post' was offered him. He therefore returned to college to work double tides, the same star gilding his horizon and cheering him on.

Rose meanwhile had developed a hard and selfish character. Pleased in early years to have the devotion of Fred, whose position and family were high, and whose charming disposition and manners made him universally popular, she was nevertheless quite unprepared to keep her heart for one who had as yet no position of his own. Her ambition and her thirst for admiration kept pace with her years; while her deep-rooted envy of Gertrude,

all unguessed at by Gertrude herself, brought into play some of the worst passions of the human heart. Like the syren on the rock, she combed her luxuriant hair and sang her luscious songs to lure him—alas! only to wreck his hope and joy. Where shall we find words severe enough to characterize the woman who is guilty of such conduct? Yet it is done every day; and the man who is the victim of such cruelty is often more sneered at than pitied, as, like some wounded creature, he steals into the cover, sometimes to die, or if he come forth again, to go maimed in his affections, and often with a distrust of the entire sex, all his days.

'Fred looks well,' said Mrs. Heywood to Rose as they retreated up-stairs to resume some millinery operations thus provokingly interrupted; 'but he has a cough, and his colour came and went in a queer way.'

'How do you like that?' holding up a charming hat.

'Immensely; but where did you get money to buy that lovely feather? The scarlet tip is bewitching.'

'We play for money. I actually beat Sir Everard at chess yesterday; and as he considers me his pupil—ah, ha!—he gave me a five-pounder.'

'And when you lose?'

'Ah, then,' sarcastically, 'we are playing for love.' As she spoke, she shook out the folds of a pretty green 'arrangement' which her tasteful fingers had just finished elaborating, and which, with the bewitching hat and scarlet tip, suited, *à merveille*, her dark style of beauty.

'That Léonor Chantry is to be there this afternoon,' said Rose, 'a niece or something of Madame le Blanc. Madame would give her ears for her to be Lady Egerton. Paris is less gay now, is it not, mother, than it used to be?'

'There is no court, you see, no royal centre of fashion; every one seems expecting, waiting—for what?'

'It is dull enough,' said Rose, 'the life here,—for girls at least, —not to go to balls as we do in England, nor come out before

they are married. At the ball at the Duchess's the other night there were only four unmarried young ladies. They keep their daughters—the upper ten, that is—in convents till they are finished, then home they go, and a *mariage de convenance* is arranged for them. After that they can go into all the gaiety they choose.'

'Yes, there's no home-life in France,' said Mrs. Heywood.

'All the better,' exclaimed Rose bitterly. 'Ah, there is the victoria! it is time to go,' completing her pretty toilette by drawing on a pair of long, perfectly-fitting gloves.

The *garçon* who assisted the ladies into Madame Jacqueline's victoria was desired to say to the English *monsieur*, should he call again, that Miss Heywood was in her room ill, and that Madame attended upon her.

In the morning, as Fred was leaving the *pension*, he met an old college friend—Percy, who was spending the winter in Paris walking the hospitals. Percy, hearing that Fred was alone, took possession of him, and carried him off to see Napoleon's Tomb, sketching out a programme of sight-seeing for him during the few days he had to spend in Paris.

Fred, however, did not fall so readily into the kind plans as might have been expected. He pleaded cold, from which he was plainly suffering, and added, in his frank way, that his visit to Paris was more to see some Scotch friends than the sights of the city. Punctual to his engagement, he returned, accompanied by Percy, to the *pension*.

The sun, alas! if not sufficiently up when he called before for Rose to venture out, was down now; but he should see her, out or in, and that was all he wanted. The *garçon* delivered his message, and Fred's heart sank.

'When can I come back to see the ladies?' he asked.

'*Je ne sais pas*,' with a shrug and a grimace.

'Come, Fred,' said Percy, anxious to keep up the dignity of the sex before this knowing *garçon*; 'you won't have *time* to come back to-day,' and he armed him away. 'I am due at a

Reception,' taking out his watch; 'come along, and see some of our French society.'

Fred had no engagements—no—nothing to do, nothing to think about but Rose, and mechanically he accompanied Percy to—Sir Everard's Reception!

It was an unusually gay one this afternoon; and as the two young men mingled among the crowd, they could not help hearing remarks upon what was evidently the absorbing topic of conversation.

'I bet you two to one, our French blonde cuts out your English brunette,' said a French officer to an English gentleman.

'Done,' was the reply; 'the brunette has two advantages—she is a countrywoman, and she is first on the field.'

Percy called Fred's attention to several French girls of no mean attractions, who, by their airy manners and sprightly badinage, entertained a group of admirers, but Fred made no response.

Turning to his companion, Percy was struck with his look.

With his eyes fixed on a group in the adjoining room, he was lost to every other sight and sound. For there stood Rose, flushed and radiant, with Sir Everard by her side, while Egerton, who was the real cause of her bright looks, stood near, joining in the conversation. Mrs. Heywood was there too, engrossed in talk with a lady of rank; while the fair Léonor, to whom many were paying court, and who seemed in brilliant spirits, watched keenly, though furtively, the two observed of all observers. Had a cold bullet struck Fred's heart, the pain could hardly have been more acute.

'Who is he?' at last he managed to say to Percy, glancing at Sir Everard.

'The man *la belle Rose* is to marry, to be sure. Do you know her? All Paris is talking of it.'

Fred's tell-tale face revealed enough to make Percy repent of his hasty words. Tightly compressing his lips, he stood and gazed, much as the fascinated bird does at the serpent

that is charming it to its death, and more than enough he saw to strike a death-blow at all his fairest and fondest hopes.

'Come,' said Percy at last, 'it's awfully hot; we've had enough of it! Let's take a turn in the Bois,' and the two friends left the scene.

Should he seek an explanation from Rose? such was the burden of Fred's thoughts, as, stunned and silent, he walked with Percy out among the lamp-lights, and with the calm, clear sky overhead.

Yes, he at last decided, he must know for certain the facts involving his happiness—his life. Bidding Percy 'good-night,' he bent his steps towards the *pension*. He would watch her home-coming, and hear his fate from her own lips, and them only.

Up and down he walked, the cold intensifying as night advanced, but the terrible fever in his veins burning like a fire within him. Every *fiacre* that approached the door he scanned, while the crack of every *cocher's* whip in the frosty air fell like a knell on his heart.

At last, after a late evening at the Jacqueline's, she came. A rapid altercation ensued between Mrs. Heywood and the *cocher* about his fare, while Rose glided into the house. Five minutes after, Fred knocked. The sleepy *garçon* assured him the English *mademoiselle* was still in her room, and startled Fred by saying it was too late *pour faire visite;* 'it was one o'clock of the morning.'

'I shall wait,' was all Fred's murmured reply, and the *garçon*, with a shrug, retreated and closed the door.

Up and down among the trees and the lamps of the quiet adjoining Avenue Fred paced, heedless of the piercing cold; and when the morning sounds woke up sleepy humanity to the prospective pains or pleasures—as the case might be—of a new day, they fell strangely on the strained nerves of poor Fred. He was conscious of nothing but an aching pain at his heart, and an increase of the terrible foreboding of evil which had seized upon him.

At the earliest possible visiting hour he again stood at the *pension* door. The *garçon* started at the changed look of the English *monsieur*, since twenty-four hours before he had appeared radiant and bright. He led the way to the *salon*, in which two or three French ladies were reading the morning papers or writing letters. In a few minutes he returned, and handed a little perfumed note to Fred. It ran thus—

'DEAR FRED,—I am ill, and cannot see you, else would fain have said what I am compelled to write. We must part. I thought you had grown weary of me. Mother's affairs are critical; for her sake I make the sacrifice, which, though it may look hard, is simple duty. Do not attempt to shake my decision; it is irrevocable.—Yours faithfully, 'ROSE.'

Placing the note in its envelope, and bowing to the ladies, Fred walked out, looking, as the *garçon* remarked to the *maître d'hôtel*, 'like only the English ghost of himself the day before!'

Such is life! a kaleidoscopic change of events from bright to grey—from the rosy glow of life and hope to the bleak coldness of despair or death. Yet the shifting pictures which a child's hand may shake up are the fruit of an underlying, patient, scientific hand. How much more are the events which make or mar our happiness, which often hinge, too, on the most trivial occurrences, presided over by the unerring hand and the tender heart of the God of love! Turning into one street instead of another; meeting a stranger at a casual visit, or a friend in an unlooked-for place; taking care of a clock! with what indifference do we treat such episodes, and yet how charged are they with influence for our weal or woe! What need to take up the precept of the wise man, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy steps.'

CHAPTER XXV.

'That rod hits hardest which is cut out of the thicket our own hands have planted.'

THERE is perhaps no more remarkable law in God's providential dispensations among men than that of retribution, whether we look for its fulfilment generally among the children of nature, or of grace more particularly. From the divine announcement in the Noachian age, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' to the minuter details in the Mosaic economy, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' there is this plain law revealed, that as we sow we shall reap. And while in the progressive morality of the Old Testament, and the still subtler and sublimer teaching of New Testament Christianity, all personal revenge of ill is clearly taken out of the injured individual's hands, there is still the same spirit of retributive justice running through it all. 'Recompense to no man evil for evil,' such is the teaching of Him who gave His life for His enemies. What! you exclaim, let alone, let off the man, the woman, who has blighted my best hopes, or bitterer still, the hopes of one dear to me as my own life? let *him* go free to enjoy his portion of good things, while I, crippled, depressed, must crawl on through life the victim of his selfishness and lies? As far as *you* are concerned, yes. Yea, farther still, if you would prove to yourself that you belong to Him whose kingdom is governed by such laws, you must learn to 'love your enemies,

to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you, and to pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.'

The incisiveness of this command of Christ is noteworthy, passing, as it does, from outward, beneficent actions towards an enemy—actions which may have within them the selfish kernel of 'see how generous and forgiving I am!'—on to the unseen action of praying for that enemy. Outward graciousness may attract and charm the onlooker, and done by you from such a motive, you 'have your reward.' But with no human eye upon you—to pray for him who has wronged you, who is despitefully using you and persecuting you, ah! it is to prove yourself to be a child of your Father in heaven. I tell you, you will get the sting of the bitterest feelings extracted there, and you will be astonished at the calm which will steal over your poor heart. And what of the vengeance? Shall the injurious one go free as though he had not sinned? No. 'Vengeance is mine, *I* will repay, saith the Lord.' And often it is in kind. Without any special pleading in favour of a doctrine which more and more fills our mind, and which the experience of daily life around us is constantly exemplifying, the result of our observation is that out of ten cases of outstanding sorrow or bereavement, six will be found to be reaping in kind the fruit of the seed their own hand sowed.

How often the drunkard finds the truth of these solemn words, in which, as in a nut-shell, the whole doctrine of retribution seems wrapped up: 'As thy sword has made women childless. so shall thy mother be childless among women.' How often, too, does the girl who in her early home has been disobedient to her father, and scornful and ungracious to her tender mother, wonder, long years after in her own home, that *her* children are so rude, so disappointing, so unloving towards her! She pities herself as the victim of a hard fate, when some day, as with a lightning-flash, the memory of her own past conduct is unlocked, and, brought face to face with her present sorrow, she discerns the fruit

of the seed then sown. How often—and this is more strictly in harmony with our present subject—how often is the lonely home and the desolate heart the simple harvest of sorrow for carelessness of the feelings of others in early days, when the best affections of the heart were trifled with or trampled under foot.

My young reader, think of this while yet it is your sowing-time. We would fain keep thorns from your path and pillow, fain help you to sow the seed of earnest, true, and loving deeds, which shall bless and sweeten your own life and the life of others. This vengeance sometimes overtakes the action of the evil-doer swiftly, as the thunder-clap follows close on the lightning-flash; in other cases it tracks its object long yet closely, as the hound follows on the heels of the hunted deer. The cup which sooner or later must be drunk may contain, in essence, the strength of years, as in the case of an ardent nature, which experiences in a day, an hour, the remorseful anguish of a lifetime; while in the case of a less intense nature, the suffering may be distilled, and the sorrow may shroud in shadow an existence which, but for that one past sin, might have had all about it the glow of love and peace.

Rose's retribution came swiftly and in kind.

To what terrible excess will an evil nature lead one who, acting on the impetuous and headlong impulse of the feeling uppermost in the mind, rushes to the fulfilment of its desires, unrestrained either by conscience or discretion!

During the few remaining days of Captain Egerton's stay in Paris, Rose was in a quite painful state of excitement. She thought of him and of him only by day, and his image filled her dreams by night. She made no effort to call off such unwomanly, because unsolicited affections from their object, by summoning to their aid either wholesome pride or occupation; rather she sought his company constantly, contriving through Léonor—who secretly rejoiced at this evacuation by the enemy of the field of Sir Everard's attentions—to get invitations to places where she knew Captain Egerton would be.

His reserve and his avoidance of her society she attributed to his self-restraint, arising, doubtless, from the diffidence he felt in asking her brilliant self to become the wife of one destined to service in such an unhealthy climate, and under orders to start so immediately; while she worked herself up into the belief that her love was what he longed for, without which, indeed, he would go forth to duty—even to glory—lonely and sad.

Two nights before he was to leave Paris he dined at the Jacqueline's, to whom, of course, he had on his arrival been introduced. It was a quiet, informal party, and in the *salon*, when the gentlemen joined the ladies, Egerton seated himself by Rose. He felt he had been cold towards her, perhaps severely so, and she was a link between him and Lonshire. He would probably never see her again; for he had engagements next day which would occupy all his time, and both she and her mother had been kind to him in the extreme.

Rose was flushed and brilliant, and had a softness in her look and manner which touched him. The little Jacquelines, notwithstanding the cold, went out into the verandah to watch the stars, and to look for a comet which was predicted to be coming.

'What a glorious moon!' said Rose, glancing out after the children. 'And those stars! I do love the stars, they are so friendly and faithful!'

'Ah, if you saw them in the East!' said Egerton; 'the whole heavens glittering and quivering with light. Many a time they guide and save the traveller.'

'How I should like to see them!' said Rose, interpreting, in her vanity, that he wished she could see them. 'It may be fanciful, but is it not nice,' she went on, 'for friends to look on the same star at a certain hour, and think of each other? Oh! see how splendid Jupiter is!' and she moved into the verandah.

Egerton had to follow, and they stood together gazing up into the calm, bespangled heavens.

'Elise,' addressing the child who stood near them, 'would you fetch me my fur cloak? It is cold here, and the *salon* is so hot.' She gave some directions to the little girl, who ran off in search of it.

'It is too cold for you,' said Egerton; 'pray let us go in,' as he found himself suddenly alone with Rose.

'Fix upon a star for *us* to look upon at a certain hour, Captain Egerton,' she said hurriedly, moving to the far end of the verandah. 'Oh, to think you are going away to leave me!' she went on. 'Cruel, cruel fate! It cannot, must not, shall not be!' She placed her trembling hand upon his arm, rested her head upon his shoulder, and—told him—yes,—I blush to write the words, but she did,—she told him of her passionate love for him!

Had a serpent suddenly started up from his feet and coiled itself round him, Egerton could not have been more startled and shocked than at this surprising declaration. For a moment he was silent, then firmly disengaging himself from her, and casting on her a look which, in the moonlight, had a livid fire in it, he said—

'Apart from every other reason,' thus sparing her the expression of the contempt which filled his soul,—'apart from every other reason, Miss Heywood, my heart is not free to give!' He turned away, then said nervously, but in a tone of deep pity, 'When you come to think remorsefully of this, remember it is buried here,' placing his hand upon his heart. So saying, he vanished, leaving Rose quivering from head to foot with wounded feeling and pride.

Resting her arms on the verandah to steady herself, she summoned up the evil passions at her beck to support her under this bitterest mortification. 'Not free, indeed! who holds you enchained?' she muttered. 'Gertrude? Ah ha! Now, by ye stars above,' lifting her blazing eyes, 'I vow to avenge myself. I will move heaven and earth to prevent *that!*'

Terrible were the thoughts and emotions that swept over her, gathering strength as she yielded to them, all so

rapidly too, and the resolution to have revenge rooted itself in her inmost soul. It was the one sweet drop in her bitter cup to-night.

As she re-entered the *salon* she picked up a letter. It was addressed to Captain Egerton. She thrust it into her pocket, and putting a violent restraint upon her feelings, talked sweetly of the stars to the other ladies, who, however, declared their preference of warm rooms to star-gazing on a winter night!

'Has the Capitaine left us?' asked Madame Jacqueline, who had been seeing after her sick baby up-stairs, as she re-entered the *salon*, 'or has he gone with the others to the smoking-room?'.

'Ah!' said Rose, with an air of perfect nonchalance, 'he charged me to make his apology to you. He had an engagement which compelled him to leave.'

'What a splendid man is that *capitaine!*' said Madame; 'how handsome and how dignified! He keeps all the young ladies at their respeck-table distance from himself. None of your flirting and frivolous *officiers*, I do admire him so ve—ry much! He leaves for the West Indies; ah! we shall no more see him! I wish I had once more shook the hands off him!'

By the light of her lamp in her poor little room that night, her long black hair dishevelled, and with hot but tearless eyes, Rose traced out the words of the kidnapped letter: 'I am bewildered more and more at the thought of your going away,' so it ran. 'Alas! how shall I arrange without you! I am lost in sorrow for ourselves, but you will strengthen and cheer me. Yes, I will meet you at the Café in the Palais Royal to-morrow at eight o'clock. I cannot, I fear, quit *le magasin* before then.'

There was no date, no signature, and the handwriting was that of a rather uneducated person. Rose puzzled over it. Was this the one who held his heart enchained? No. She dismissed the idea, and Gertrude unbidden leaped into her place side by side of Egerton. 'But like other men he has also his *chères amies*,' she conjectured on, 'and this is one of them—some

poor wretch who is breaking her heart at parting with him.' Rose put the letter away, and laid her plans; and far on in the morning laid her aching, scheming head upon her pillow.

She awoke to the consciousness of a dreadful and depressing weight; and as the scene of the past night stood out in ghastly vividness before her, on her rival her deadliest hatred rested; and with the infatuation which is the fruit of continual thought on one subject, she assured herself that if only her rival was dead, or—which might suit her purpose equally well—was fatally prejudiced against him, Egerton even yet might be her own. The days were past when cunning men would, for a fabulous price, give one a fan, a flower, which carried death in its very touch. Ah yes! but there was that other poison in her own hands—the poison of detraction. She would compound it carefully and administer it skilfully. The letter was a powerful ingredient. She read it over again, and arranged her plans.

All day the snow fell heavily, and at night no moon shed its light over the gay city, which lay as if in its winding-sheet. A few minutes before eight a slight, black-robed, closely-veiled figure stood in the niche of a corner shop in the Palais Royal. A small elderly woman, one of the maids of the *pension*, whom Rose—for it was she—had bribed to escort her, moved restlessly up and down, shivering in the cold. Rose's watch-tower commanded the entrance to the principal *café*. There were few about in such a night, besides—should she not know him—feel his presence in black darkness? Presently a muffled-up figure approached the gaily-lighted *café*, and simultaneously a woman—whether dark or fair the keen eyes fixed upon her could not discern, for she wore a thick veil—met him, and sprang at once lightly in at the *café* door, followed by Egerton.

'*Ah, qu'il fait froid, Mademoiselle!*' exclaimed her attendant, approaching Rose.

'Very! Go instantly, follow them, and bring me word what they are about.'

'*Ah, oui, oui!*' and Pietra, nothing loth to exchange for a few

minutes the biting cold for the warm *café* and a hot cup of chocolate, pushed her way in.

'Well?' as in a few minutes she returned.

'They sit at one small table, and trink a small cup ob coff-ee, and they speak earn—ist—ly, but not low.'

'How long?' speaking rapidly in French; 'how long do you attend here?'

'Don't worry, Pietra,' impatiently, 'you shall have my Spanish lace *fichu*, as well as the Pompadour dress, if you will wait. You *must* wait,' under her breath. 'And be quiet!'

Pietra grinned, and resumed her ambling up and down. Nor had she long to wait. In one quarter of an hour the two figures reappeared at the *café* door. A *fiacre* was waiting, into which Egerton handed the little figure respectfully, yet without even the ordinary salutation of shaking hands; and as it drove off, he walked briskly away in the other direction, and Rose saw him no more.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'I pray thee, sort thy heart to patience.'
'Time and the hour run through the roughest day.'

APTAIN EGERTON left Paris with a heavy heart. He had failed in the object of his visit, which had been to make a successful appeal to Sir Everard on behalf of Anton. Nothing, however, could shake the old man in his determination, whatever his convictions were, to ignore the child, and the irritating scorn with which he had treated his nephew's endeavours to bring him to reason and justice had embittered what was possibly their last interview on earth.

This necessary visit to Paris had prevented him, too, accepting Lady Morell's pressing invitation to 'see them all again' before setting out on this 'horrid banishment.' And he must go forth with no sight of Gertrude to bless his heart, no word even to shape his hopes. It was a desolate time, and never perhaps had the tempter worked more subtilely in his heart than during these past few days. All the more were the temptations harassing because of the tinge of truth which coloured them. 'What is the use?' whispered the wily serpent,—'what is the use of persisting in what is only hardening the old man's heart against his son? making him furious at you, and thus ruining your own prospects by losing his favour?

Why not let the boy sink into obscurity, as his own father, who surely has the best right to determine his fate, decrees? Your own fortune and position are thus secured. You could retire to-morrow, press your suit with Gertrude, who, your heart tells you, loves you, whatever the strange silence may mean; and what a sphere of happiness and usefulness would be before you! Besides, may it not, in providence, be a wise arrangement for the boy, saving him from the snares of rank and wealth? And why spend those last days in bitter altercation with your nearest relative rather than in close proximity to her who is dearer to you than life?'

But Egerton, drawing his sword,—the same sword which the Captain of his salvation wielded in the hour of His fiery trial,—repulsed the enemy. This was one of his thrusts: 'What doth the *Lord* require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, shall He not *with Him* also *freely give us all things?*' The 'all things' including the best human affection.

Oh yes! he would trust God and do the right, and anew he committed his whole case into His hands; and in quietness and confidence was his strength. The saddest heart at parting with him was Anton's. Five years to a boy of thirteen was an almost hopeless prospect, reaching away to a horizon which his forlorn young heart could hardly touch. But Egerton, whose love for Anton was intense, and whose sorrow at parting with him was deep, cheered him with words based upon principles which, boy as he was, he could more than guess at, and which underlay, he knew, his dear friend's own life. The words inspired Anton with fresh hope and courage. He determined to persevere at his studies, animated with the desire of pleasing and surprising Egerton, and fired with the hope of rising some day to a distinction like his. Egerton made the minutest arrangements for his comfort at school; and Gertchen was near, should any special care at her hand be required, with her all but motherly love and devotion to her boy.

Egerton was gone, and Paris was empty! so thought Rose as she reclined on the hard little couch in her attic-room the morning after his departure. She lay dreaming, as she was in the habit of doing,—day-dreaming, letting in the enemy, who by active occupation might have been barred out of head and heart. Back to the Fort, and the calm, dignified life there, with its wealth and *prestige*, her fevered fancy flew; and Gertrude, in her truthfulness and beauty, rose unbidden, as she was ever doing, before her mind's eye. As she mused and envied and coveted, the fire of jealousy within her grew hotter and fiercer, until in heart, and in the sight of God, she was a murderess! The passionate love for Egerton changed into a deadly hatred; every feature of his noble character became contorted, and that not because he was changed, but because his attitude of necessity towards her was changed. To blight the prospects and ruin the happiness of those two became her more than ever firmly rooted resolve. Much of Egerton's social position, she argued with herself, depended on his uncle. He was presumptive heir of his title, of course, but he was dependent on Sir Everard's grace for what property or wealth he might choose to leave him. No wonder he was anxious to keep in favour with him! But she had her revenge ready to hand in this direction! With Gertrude, her aim must be to poison and prejudice her mind fatally against Egerton. This was a less easy part of the programme she was arranging. She could not, after her conduct to Fred, write to Gertrude as formerly, but she should manage it somehow, and Rose, having calmly plotted the ruin of the happiness of her two friends, drew a sigh of relief, and fell into a long, sound sleep. She awoke revived and refreshed, and began her toilette. She and her mother were to spend the afternoon at Sir Everard's, and she had 'that tiresome' Léonor to outshine and outwit. Her mother, who had come to see why Rose had not obeyed the summons to twelve o'clock *déjeûner*, had been glad to find her asleep; for though ignorant of the real nature of the excitement through which, during the past twenty-four hours

in particular, she had passed, she was startled by Rose's haggard look and increased irritability of temper. But this sleep had been indeed a beauty-sleep, and as Rose stood ready to accompany her mother to Sir Everard's, she was a vision of female loveliness. She wore a black velveteen costume, tight-fitting to her slight figure, with a cape of Spanish lace, and a Rubens black velvet hat, with bunches of pansies, a bouquet of the same flowers being worn also in her dress. Silver ornaments relieved the severity of the toilette, which was altogether unlike Rose's usual rather *prononcé* style of dress. She had, however, affected it during Egerton's stay in Paris, and it became her well, she knew. Her rich black hair waved on her white forehead, and her dark, beautiful eyes, shaded by long lashes, had an unusual brilliancy in them to-day—the light, alas! of an evil eye, while the glow of excitement flushed her soft cheeks. She threw round her a fur cloak, and declared herself ready to start. Mrs. Heywood expressed her satisfaction with the charming 'get up' of her daughter, and prophesied a great conquest. She added that they must soon be leaving Paris, as *le maître d'hôtel* had intimated a speedy rise in the charges of his *pension*, in anticipation of a coming gay season.

'The shoe pinching as usual,' said Rose angrily. 'It is enough to madden one to be for ever reminded that we are poor. I cannot endure it!' and she stamped with her foot.

Mrs. Heywood, as, poor woman, she has many times done before, looked hurt, and exclaimed, 'As if it were my fault that your uncle ruined us, or as if *I* didn't feel the horrors of poverty as much as you possibly can!'

Did it never strike this mother that her daughter's state of mind and heart was due to her own upbringing? Did she never contrast the homeless, aimless existence she and her child led with the quiet but earnest lives of others no better off than themselves? Did she never reproach herself that instead of sowing in her young heart the seeds of truth, and training her up in the fear of God, trusting to Him to under-

take for her in all things, temporal as well as spiritual, she had neglected all such teaching, had prided herself in the girl's outward beauty of face and form, and had encouraged its adornment, leaving uncultivated and untrained the inner and nobler part of her being? Whether or not she had ever been pained by such reflections, she had learned now to stifle and stamp them out of her heart, and her one ruling desire was to make a brilliant settlement in life for Rose—a settlement which should for ever lift her beyond the miseries of their present 'mean existence,' and place her in a position to which her beauty and accomplishments entitled her. That she herself should share, or at least be included in this coming prosperity, she always, of course, intended. She was thankful Captain Egerton was gone, for all her hopes for Rose centred in Sir Everard.

Alas! when will men and women learn that worldly wisdom is the sheerest folly, and when set in opposition to the will of God is sure to disappoint us?

Rose went to Sir Everard's *réunion* this afternoon, determined to make up for lost time. While Egerton was in Paris she had had rather a complicated part to play, being more than willing that he should see his uncle's evident admiration for her, while he should also be witness to her indifference to such attentions. Skilfully as she thought she managed, she did not outwit his penetration. It had made him see the possibility, at least, of his uncle marrying again, and brought matters to a point between them. In plain terms he told Sir Everard that by his line of conduct towards Anton he was complicating his own affairs; that in deference to his commands he (Egerton) had followed the course of concealment so obnoxious to his own feelings, but that in the event either of Sir Everard's death or of his marriage, he should take instant steps to put Anton in his just place as his son and heir. Sir Everard, whose head at the time was full of Rose and of matrimonial visions, was staggered by his nephew's 'mad folly and obstinacy;' but, as we have already seen, per-

sisted in altogether ignoring Anton, trusting to his good luck to tide him over all difficulties.

Rose's triumph this afternoon was complete. She more than regained her ground with Sir Everard, and Léonor was nowhere! She put forth her blandishments and delusive flatteries, and these, from a young and beautiful woman towards a worldly, oldish man, were irresistible. Sir Everard had a strong impression that his nephew was in love with Rose, —an idea which Rose fostered,—and he inwardly chuckled at the thought of carrying off from him the prize. His attentions became unmistakeable. The first part of her revenge-programme went smoothly on as the days flew past; there was only one other movement to be performed for it to be played out. Why did it drag? The reader understands, though Rose did not, the horns of the dilemma on which Sir Everard was placed; but determined at last to know his fate, he offered himself to Rose with all his golden advantages. She accepted, of course, but was staggered by his request that for a time, at least, their engagement should be kept secret. What could this mean? what hidden skeleton in his house was ready to throw itself across her brilliant future? The delay was intolerable. She had made up her mind to be installed in the beautiful hotel before the gay season came round, and, as Lady Egerton, to shine forth resplendent in the fashionable world. And here, on the very threshold, her wings were clipped! The excitement and worry of the whole affair brought on another attack of illness on Sir Everard. The doctors enjoined perfect quiet; he was forbidden even to think. Mrs. Heywood was at her wits' end, or what, practically, was worse, at her purse's end. Since the marriage must be delayed, and the engagement even concealed, there was no other alternative than to leave Paris, and bury themselves alive in some out-of-the-way Swiss place, 'retrenching,' poor souls! till Sir Everard should recover. That he would get well and strong the doctors had no manner of doubt. There was tact as well as necessity in the Swiss move. Some fanciful pretext on the score of health was put forward, while the

pecuniary necessity was kept entirely out of sight; and if the change from Paris to some small, dull village was 'disgusting,' at the end of the gloomy tunnel of poverty through which they were passing, the bright, golden day of prosperity opened gloriously up!

CHAPTER XXVII.

'Who steals my purse steals trash:
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.'

WE left Gertrude in the spring-time of the year,—following out her convictions, and living her earnest life,—to acquaint ourselves with, alas! the evil and selfish career which Rose has meanwhile been eagerly prosecuting. It is pleasant to withdraw our gaze from her, and turn again to Gertrude in the still, sweet spring season.

'Only fancy,' said Lady Morell to Gertrude, who had come in one afternoon to have tea and a chat with her, 'I have a letter from Rose Heywood this morning. I suppose I must have asked her to write, for she says,' taking up the envelope, '"According to *promise*," or something, "she now sends me a few lines."'

'Really!' said Gertrude with interest; 'and how are they? She hasn't answered my last letter; but I suppose they are on the move after their long stay in Paris. I shall be hearing from her when they are settled down in Switzerland.'

'This is dated,' said Lady Morell, glancing at the contents, 'at some place in—I really can't make out where,—near Zurich, Etolf or Edulf; but no matter, if I write, I can just copy the address.'

'What are they about?' asked Gertrude. This was April, and she had not heard since Christmas. 'I was just meaning to write her again if only I knew where to address.'

'She tells me some cur—ious things,' said Lady Morell, who, since the receipt of this letter, has been thirsting to tell it all out to Gertrude, and yet who felt pained 'at the things in it!' 'She tells me first of their gay doings in Paris,—friends wouldn't let them go, obliged to prolong their stay, and so on; always high satisfaction with themselves and their doings, what Sir John used to tell me *I* had none of. Dear me, I was just looking in the glass to-day, Gerty, and thinking how changed I am since the day I was married, and a curious thought came into my mind: would *he* know me now? I was so young, you know, compared with him; that's the worst of girls marrying men so much older than themselves. It does all very well for a few years, but *they* become quite old when *we're* just in our prime, and then they can't take you about to see places, and you have to stay at home. It's not so bad if they have no cough; but most old people have bad coughs, and oh! to hear them wheezing and going on, it's simply awful, and'—

'And Rose!' interrupted Gertrude, hopeless of any finish to this long, back-going reminiscence, 'how does she like Switzerland this time?'

'She doesn't say, but it'll soon be over, she mentions, for they are to be back in Paris in May!'

'She seems devoted to Paris,' said Gertrude, who longed to hear more of her friends.

'No wonder! I'll never forget my first visit there. Sir John went off to the Louvre, and places like that, every day, and I and Harvey went straight to the Palais Royal. Oh! the jewellery, the nick-nacks, the lace, the ribbons, we never tired of them. We used to go to the *coiffeur's*, too, to have my hair dressed, and Harvey got the new styles. But Sir John didn't fancy the French *coiffeuring*, and said he liked my own way best. It was there I lost my best ear-rings, too. I'll never forget it. Some people said I acted stupidly; but I never could

see it, for the French people told lies to me; but oh, how I cried over those ear-rings!'

'What ear-rings?' said Gertrude unguardedly.

'Oh, you must have heard about it! The loveliest ear-rings you ever saw, diamonds and pearls, long-shaped, and cost, I'm afraid to say how much! Well, we went to the Opera one night. Sir John went just to please me, for he didn't know "Neil Gow" from "God Save the Queen." We got beautiful seats, and the singing was delicious, though I didn't care for it in French. I was a first-rate French scholar, and Sir John said he didn't know how he would ever have got on without me to speak; but they flew on at such a pace, you couldn't make head or tail of what they would be at. The Royal Family were up in a box above us, the ladies splendidly dressed, and blazing with jewels. At the end of the first act, Sir John went out to get some sherry to brace him up for the second part, and a gentleman stepped into the stall where I was, and said the Empress sent her compliments, and she was so struck with the beauty of my ear-rings, would I favour her with a look of one of them for five minutes? I had noticed Her Majesty staring a good deal, and they were all now looking at me. So I took out the ear-ring, and gave it to him, and away he went, promising to bring it back before the next part began. I watched for him, going up to the Royal box, but just then Sir John came back, and I told him about it. He was in a dreadful way, told me I had been cheated, that the Empress would never send such a message, and that the thief would never in this world bring back the ear-ring. No more he did, and I cried the whole night. We advertised, and promised a high reward, but it never came. Sir John was very good, and just said it would be a lesson to me, and that I was *never* to listen to strange people when "he was away."'

'But the one ear-ring wouldn't be much good to anybody,' said Gertrude; 'a clever thief would have got hold of both!'

'One morning,' Lady Morell went on, 'I was looking at some lace that had been sent to our hotel for me to choose

from, when the *garçon* came into the room, and said a gentleman wanted to speak to me on urgent affairs. I said Sir John was out; but the gentleman came in. He told me he had heard of my severe loss, and that he believed he had found out the thief of my lovely ear-ring; that, however, as he couldn't be sure, would I allow him to see the other? I was so delighted, and soon got it for him; would I trust it to him for one quarter of an hour? He had a *fiacre* at the door, and would drive to the place where the ear-ring was, make sure he was right, bring them both back to me, and claim the promised reward. So I said "certainly," gave it into his hands, and away he went. At the door of our apartment he met Sir John, but he just bowed, and went quickly down-stairs.

'"Who was your visitor?" Sir John asked me, and I was so delighted and told him. Oh what a state he was in! He flew to the window to see if the *fiacre* was there. No, it was gone! He rang, and asked everybody who that man was. Nobody knew anything, and oh! it turned out he was just a companion of the other thief, Gerty, and they had got my two beautiful ear-rings!'

'Poor Sir John!' came almost unconsciously from Gerty, as with difficulty she controlled her merriment.

'It *was* a pity; but it wasn't, you see, my fault,' continued Lady Morell blandly; 'it was the fault of those French thieves not speaking the truth. I told Sir John that, a—n—d'—

'What did he say?'

'He fumed and stormed a good deal, not at *me*, of course, but at the "French scoundrels," as he called them, and then he gave me another pair to make up to me.'

'Aunt Julia,' said Gertrude at last, determined to get a hearing on what had brought her over to the Hall this afternoon, 'I want your help about the Murries. You know how the Major has been going on.'

'Oh yes! Harvey was telling me that at Kilbarton the other day he took a wager with somebody that he would drink a bottle of brandy at a sitting, and keep his head and stand

upon his feet. Why do they allow him to go about at large like that, as Sir John used to say when he was a justice?'

'Well but, Aunt Julia,' said Gertrude eagerly, for her time would not permit of any further reminiscences a quarter of a century old, 'they have nobody that can prevent him, and if you only knew what Kate went through for him the night of the dreadful storm! I think it will kill her! She won't hear of him being put into an asylum,—the place for him, I think, —but she won't. You know some of her mother's friends; could you not write to them, and ask them to help with a little money to board him in some far-away place, where he would be comfortable and be kept from disgracing his poor family? Even a few months' quiet would do good. The boys are getting on so fast with Bruce; but the way he goes on breaks in upon everything, and besides, they feel the shame of it so keenly.'

Lady Morell promised to write, and Gertrude arranged to come over soon to hear the result.

'Oh, there is Papa!' she exclaimed, as the Colonel appeared at the window, 'and I haven't heard about Rose yet.'

'Take the letter,' said Lady Morell; 'there are no secrets, only you—a—will be sorry to hear things about our friend. Sir John used to say, "Never believe anything you hear, and only the half of what you see;" but I never could rightly understand that, only he was so clever and so *much* older than me.'

It was not till she got at night into her own room that Gertrude found leisure to read Rose's letter. She longed for tidings of her, but was unprepared for some of its contents. 'We have seen a great deal of Captain Egerton,' Rose wrote. 'I wish we had seen less. We admired him so much when he visited you, and fancied his character was as noble as his looks. *Hélas!* he was very much in love with a young lady here, a beautiful brunette, and she with him. Every one expected a marriage; but it turns out he has an entanglement which prevents him marrying! I and a friend *saw* him at a public *café* in Paris, with a handsome French girl of the *ouvrier*

class,—"the entanglement," no doubt. He did not see us; and we were so shocked we kept, of course, out of sight. The enclosed note, which he dropped the night before in a *salon* where we met, speaks for itself. The brunette means to wait till "the entanglement" is bought over to silence somehow, and then marry him; meanwhile they are engaged. Captain Egerton's own uncle, a splendid man, calls him a hypocrite, and dislikes him awfully. He has a way of irritating his uncle so terribly, that he gets quite ill, and had a severe attack in consequence of his last visit. Did you never think he admired Gerty? I did; but he spoke quite indifferently about her, which riled me, or rather, he didn't seem to care to hear or speak about her. If he can't marry, I suppose he thinks he may amuse himself with girls; but it is hard lines for them! He has gone, as, of course, he would tell you, with his battery to the West Indies for five years, consequently his uncle is recovering!'

Here the letter dropped from Gerty's hands. What a terrible shock it gave her! For a time a sort of dumb stupor came over her, as she buried her head in a chair. Then she became conscious of a dreadful pain at her heart, and a feeling, too, as if everything about her had changed. She longed to close her eyes on all of earth and never open them again. But young life was strong within her; ah! and the germs of a new life, stronger than the merely natural one, were within her too. 'What has come over me?' she moaned at last; 'what—what has happened to prostrate me like this?' She roused herself to think, and by the flickering embers tried to arrange her thoughts. All suspicion of Captain Egerton's integrity and Christian character she shook off as she would the flakes of the fast-falling snow outside. Never—never could he be anything but the high-souled hero she held him to be; the means, too, of life to her soul. There must be mistake—confusion—somewhere. And yet, and her frame quivered at the thought, had he not told her of his love, by look if not in actual word? and had she not in her

happy guilelessness as good as told him of hers for him? Why, then, had he never declared it in word? Had she not in all these months past since he left been cheered by the thought of him, of his approval in her work and life, and by some unrecognised yet real hope of one day meeting again, and having all the clouds of suspense cleared off? Ah! was there any truth in this story of 'the entanglement'? and if so, had he not used her cruelly? This was a thought of agony, but it did not last; she put it from her as unworthy of herself, unworthy of him. The other part, his love, his engagement to this beautiful dark-eyed girl, though more desolating, was not so bitter. She could not live with any suspicion of his goodness clouding her mind; she must live—she would live—even under the crushing sorrow of his love—yes, his engagement—to another. Ah! how he himself had spoken to her, in their happy talks, of the power of Christ to sustain under sorrow; of the duty of His people to take His arrangements for them in a resigned and trustful spirit; of their privilege to live and suffer for Him. She found her heart being actually nerved and braced by the words he had spoken, and the high hopes with which he had inspired her, in this sorrow of which he was himself the cause! She knelt and prayed—prayed, ah! she poured out her bursting heart into the ear of her Saviour-God,—poured it out as she could not have done to her tender mother, even had she been at her side. Very deeply she felt, and acknowledged how, since she had known the truth, and had hoped that her Lord Himself and His love were in the heart of her life and work, *he* had been there too, influencing her more than she knew, usurping, she now trembled to think, the place she believed she had given to her Lord. Was her conversion after all real? Alone, and without the sweet joy of his sympathy,—of which hitherto, in all her new life, she had assured herself,—would Christian motives be strong enough to influence her, to keep her stedfast in the straight path? She prayed for a deeper sense of her sinfulness, and a stronger faith in Jesus and in His great love for her, that so

she might be constrained to live not for herself, not for any creature, but for Him. With a deep consciousness of relief and hope, Gertrude rose from her knees; sweet words came to mind, such as, 'My God shall supply *all your need*,' 'Fear not, only believe;' and as anew and, more than ever, unreservedly she put her hand trustfully into her Saviour's, she felt that, if never before, now certainly she belonged to Him.

The fire had died out, the night was spent, but as she stood at her window, and looked up into the now clear sky, a bright star shone down upon her with its silvery light, 'so sympathizing,' she thought, in the life-like sparkle of its eye, so sweet in the message it sent her,—a song without words of heavenly peace and love.

The sun rose serenely over Gertrude next morning, and roused her from her sleep; and if, as she went about her work, it was with a sense of loss as regarded human love, it was with a sense, too, of strength and at-home-ness in the love and grace of Him who was henceforth more than ever to be '*all* her salvation and all her desire.'

The power to act rightly in her thoughts towards Egerton did not come all at once. No! the struggle was often fierce; but the felt weakness in herself, and her best resolutions, made her more and more earnest at a throne of grace for the strength and wisdom which there she always got. She was truly 'made sorry after a godly sort;' in her the apostle's words were verified: 'What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!'

And when her heart felt solitary and sad, as it often did, she thought of Clotilde, whom she had so wronged, and who, through her cruelty and thoughtlessness, must have gone through some such agony as her own; she felt, too, that God's mercy was great, inasmuch as that her punishment, sore though it was, was so much less than her sins deserved. One of the means of her strength in keeping off her heart and mind from the now forbidden object, was in this divine command, which she

earnestly sought to obey. Take it, reader, if you know anything of her struggle, and it will help you too: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife (or husband, of course). Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.' Its strength lies in its being God's *command.* Had it come in the form of a recommendation, or an advice merely, it might have been set aside as not appropriate for such and such a case. But it strikes at the root of the temptation, aiming a blow at all hankering or lurking desire for any good put, in God's providence, beyond our reach. Thus the law, which at first sight looks stern, will be found on a close, an experimental acquaintance with it, to be steeped in love, to be the rule for the children of Him who is Love; who framed His laws, not from the dictates of sovereignty or holiness alone, but with the deep yearnings of His heart for the happiness of His people in this life as well as in that which is to come: 'Great peace have they who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.'

In her straightforward and conscientious desire to do her duty and be useful, Gertrude unconsciously helped forward her heart's ease. She had none of the experience of older Christians, who come to find the healing power of work and occupation, and learn to thank God for—next to His grace—their books, perhaps, or their business or work. But such was the directness, the transparency of her character, that it made her hate all sneaking tendencies to shirk her plain duty, or run into the eccentricities of selfish excitement. For grace does not change our individuality, but sanctifies it. Christ never repeats Himself. Even in this earth the variety of His works is one of its charms. In a garden, for instance, His flowers are not all lilies. Beautiful as are these flowers, there would be a monotony even in beauty; but God in His works is not monotonous, but full of variety, a variety which, while it gives a due and perfect place to each noble tree and fragrant flower, marks their individuality by the setting of other trees and flowers in which they appear.

Perhaps the narration of a few quiet and uneventful scenes may better describe her life a few weeks after the arrival of Rose's letter than any details of it on our part could give.

It is a soft summer morning. She rises at six, and secures an hour for prayer and the reading of her Bible, with the help always of a commentary. Punctual to a second, the gong announces the hour for prayers, half-past eight. Her father meets her in his stately manner, and gives her his usual morning greeting.. Breakfast follows, during which the conversation turns on the delinquencies of the cook in last night's dinner, the record of which on the slate is handed to Gertrude, and on the concoction of any particular dish on which for to-night's dinner the Colonel has set his heart.

This evening the Morells, and the Yorke Ewings, with some of their many visitors, are to dine at the Fort; and the Colonel, always particular, is fidgetty because of the continual mistakes which Simmonds, in spite of all the posting up he gets, is for ever making—mistakes of a verbal kind only, be it remarked, for his waiting and address are unimpeachable. But his Scotch tongue finds it next to impossible to pronounce the French dishes *comme il faut*, besides which he affects to despise such 'Frenchified gibberish,' and uses the prerogative of a privileged old servant to contest now and then the point with the Colonel. 'Call a spade a spade' was pretty much his practice as well as his theory.

After, bit by bit, the *ménu* this morning had been discussed by the Colonel with Gertrude, he said, 'Coach Simmonds up in the *names*; for goodness' sake don't let us be disgraced by having "Vale soup" or Julia-any soup bawled into our ears, together with grenadiers (*grendades*) of beef or "scuffles" (*soufflées*) of potatoes. It's enough to make one's hair stand on end to hear the fellow murdering the dishes as he does!'

'I'll try,' said Gertrude again; 'but good old Simmonds has no ear for'—

'Ear! that's another nuisance; you can't *whisper* a correction now, he's getting so deaf!'

Colonel Ellerslie retreated to the library as Simmonds entered to remove the breakfast things. Gertrude, who always shrank from paining the faithful if decidedly pig-headed old servant, said, in a conciliatory tone, 'Simmonds, the soups to-night are Curry and *Julienne.*'

'Aweel, Miss Gerty!'

'Please don't say "curried,"'—*Mulligatawny* has been given up as a hopeless pronunciation,—'and *julienne* is a French word, you know.'

'I sud think I did; many's the time I've had *it.*'

'Please say it.'

'Julia-any!'

'No; now listen, you must try to say it as I do. *Julienne.*'

'What's the odds, Miss Gerty?'

'Just this, Simmonds, that if you pronounce the words properly, you please the Colonel, and are doing right; if you don't attend to his wishes, you irritate him, and are doing wrong.'

'Sic a trifle, Miss Gerty!' scornfully, as he scooped off the crumbs.

'Indeed, it's no trifle! Epictetus, an old *heathen*, says, "There's two handles to everything;" and we surely should try, if we want to please God, Simmonds, to take things by the right handle.'

'Hoot ay! but what signifies names?'

'Much every way; and I want you to be a perfect butler, and you know that really includes the way you pronounce the dishes as well as the way you hand them! You'll try to-night, Simmonds? Here they are, all written down distinctly,' handing him a paper, 'and I shall be so pleased if you learn to say them properly.' Once more she said the words, making him repeat them over and over slowly after her.

'Aweel, I'm sure, Miss Gerty, ye fash yersel' extraordinar' about thae dishes, but I'll try,' pocketing the paper; 'an' if I'm spared to see my dyin' day, I'll never forget the trouble ye've pit yersel' tae for me!'

A long interview next followed with Mrs. Cookson; and

when at last Gertrude shut herself up into her *sanctum*, it was with the sweet sense of having striven to do this—to her most irksome and uncongenial work—heartily as unto the Lord. She next practised diligently her music and singing, and the last hour before luncheon was devoted to reading. One of Ruskin's works was her book to-day. Her father had a county meeting at Kilbarton, for which he started immediately after luncheon, and at the same moment Kate Murrie arrived for their usual afternoon reading. As at the close of their two hours' study they put past their books, Gerty said, 'I will walk so far with you, Kate. I am going to the Manse to see Mrs. Stewart.'

The two girls walked briskly along. It was a balmy summer afternoon; the air was soft, the trees and hedges were in their freshest green, and a perfect concert of little birds streamed forth from the groves on either side. Kate is changed since the night of the storm and her perilous walk. The earnest words lodged in her mind—tremblingly—by Gertrude had roused struggles in her heart, before that great central moment of her life, and that light which carries death in its flash had been the light of life which God had commanded to shine in upon her dismal soul; a light arousing her, bringing her, like Saul of Tarsus, face to face with the Gracious One, against whom she had been 'kicking' and finding it 'hard.' This light grew within her as days went on, and she turned, by her friend's advice, to the use of means for its increase. Many talks she has had with Gertrude, who, to her joy, has persuaded her to come with her every Sunday to Mr. Stewart's church, where the intellectual, but, above all, the spiritual cravings of their beings are met and fed. She is tasting for herself, and finding that 'God is, and that He is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him.' Her prejudices are yielding, the eyes of her understanding are being enlightened, and though Gertrude would be the last to suspect such instrumentality, her own earnest and growingly unselfish life is a main influence in this gracious change. With the piercing scrutiny

of a still half-prejudiced but awakened mind, Kate watches Gertrude, dives into her motives, and weighs her actions, while Gertrude, all unconscious of such espionage, by the beautiful transparency of her character attracts and wins her to follow her. And while she fights her way, doing fierce battle with her sin and selfishness, she little knows that she is clearing the ground for her poor, crushed sister to creep on behind! How much larger are the relations of action done for Christ than are ever thought of!

Gertrude's heart was gladdened in their walk this afternoon. The cold, doubting, defiant spirit—hitherto so characteristic of Kate—is gone, and in its place love and enthusiasm for Christ live and reign.

Gertrude found Mrs. Stewart, who was now quite a friend, engrossed as usual at this hour in painting. She was seated at a small table, brush and palette in hand; a vase full of lovely flowers was before her, which, in various arrangements, she was painting.

'I always think the last are the prettiest,' said Gertrude, as, the kindly greeting over, she inspected her friend's work. 'These *are* charming!' as, one by one, she lifted admiringly some beautifully painted fans and *placques*. 'These moss-buds and pinks are simply perfect! One wants, of course, to smell them,' laughingly. 'May I take six, and some more glove-boxes?'

'Oh, thank you ever so much!' said Mrs. Stewart heartily.

'The Yorke Ewings are sure to be enchanted with them,' said Gertrude, 'and I shall ask a decent price for them.'

'My sister Alice has got orders for me for glove-boxes and brackets, as well as fans,' Mrs. Stewart went on cheerfully. 'There! my last one for you is finished,' as she laid down her brush to refresh herself with a look of Gertrude. 'I believe now I shall succeed'—

'In what?' you ask, reader. In her resolution to make money enough by her own efforts to send Dermid, her eldest boy, to a first-class English school on which she has set her heart, instead of to a second-rate one, which is all her husband's limited

income can afford. All the winter she has been busy; and Gertrude, who is in her secret, has enthusiastically entered into the scheme, and has been getting purchasers for her beautiful work. Mrs. Stewart allows this private effort to interfere in no way with any duty that comes more immediately to hand. It is indeed but the gathering up of the fragments of her time, with the sacrifice often, it must be added, of an hour's sleep, or of some merely personal recreation.

'I have got all the others sold,' said Gertrude, as she handed a thick envelope to Mrs. Stewart; 'and the things are so much admired!'

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Stewart,—'thank you more than words can express!' and her eyes glistened with tears as she took the money.

'It gives me such a happy interest in going out to dinner-parties and places,' said Gertrude brightly, 'I was beginning to grudge the time so fearfully; then, too, there are so many bazaars and weddings going on, that people are glad to get pretty things without the trouble of making them. But you mustn't work too hard, remember,' as she looked at the almost girlish form of the minister's wife, and thought of the many duties she had besides.

'Oh, it is such happy work! and then to think of Dermid!' said the mother.

'Do you *always* feel inclined to sit down to it?' asked Gertrude.

'Inclined!'

'You don't wait for Dr. Johnson's *afflatus*, I mean,' laughingly.

'No, no! I just sit down as he did, "doggedly," when the free moments come.'

'It's the only way. Those people who keep waiting for the "inspiration," as they call it, never seem to me to do very much.'

'Ah! if they had to wait for school-fees or new carpets till then, I suspect the inspiration would come a great deal more quickly!' said Mrs. Stewart, laughing.

'Is it a very good school?' asked Gertrude presently, as

she wrapped up the various dainty articles to carry off with her for Mrs. Yorke Ewing's benefit this evening.

'First-rate; it is where my youngest brother has been educated. What I like chiefly about it is that, while it has all the advantages of a public-school education, it has the advantages, too, of a Christian home. There are only twenty boys —Mr. and Mrs. Atwood won't take more; indeed, you have to apply in good time to get a boy in, it is so much run upon. But once in,' and the mother's eyes sparkled, 'it is, humanly speaking, the making of the boy. My brother Louis was as careless a boy as you could see,—play-loving, lesson-hating,—spoilt irremediably many of us thought. I persuaded my father to send him there; I knew how he would be attended to. He went, and last Christmas he passed his examination successfully for Cooper's Hill.'

'Well done!'

'And he has got teaching of a higher kind,' said Mrs. Stewart, 'the teaching without which all other knowledge is—i—s like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Gertrude.

'I covet earnestly for my boy the best gifts,' said Mrs. Stewart.

'But,' asked Gertrude, 'wouldn't your father help you about Dermid? He is rich!'

'Ah no!' said Mrs. Stewart, while a flush spread over her face; 'I never speak of it, but I don't mind telling you; indeed, after all your help in my scheme, you have a right to know. My father was sorry at my marriage.'

'*Sorry!* such a splendid man! so awfully clever, and so good!'

'But parents—some at least—don't mind that so much as wealth and position, you know, dear. And it happened that a man who had both, but who was old enough to be my grandfather, and whom I couldn't bear, proposed for me to my father at the very time when George asked me to be his wife. George had been coming about our house for long, and

the whole family delighted in him. My father paid little attention to what was going on, and my mother being dead, we girls were left a good deal to the freedom of our own wills. I knew little about money in those days, always having plenty, but I felt that I would rather be poor with George than rich with any other man in the kingdom!'

'Well!' with much interest.

'My father was much annoyed when I told him this.'

'And did you marry without his consent?' asked Gertrude breathlessly.

'No! oh no! George wouldn't have done that. My father said we must wait a year, and never see or write to each other, and at the end of that time he would consider the matter. Of course we waited, and neither saw nor exchanged a word with each other. At the end of the time my father still objected. He was not in favour of a clergyman, a Scotch clergyman least of all; and much as he liked and esteemed George, he equally much disliked me marrying him, and "sinking," as he called it, "into a drudge on two hundred a year."'

'Then why didn't he give you enough to save you from that?' asked Gertrude indignantly.

'He wouldn't; all he gave was his consent, which we thought a great deal, and the same sum to me as I had always had in his house for my dress. My sisters are very kind, Alice especially. Many a dress and hat they send me for myself and the children; but they haven't much in their power, you know.'

'If only Mr. Clayton could hear Mr. Stewart preach!' said Gertrude enthusiastically, 'and see his classes, and know all his patient, noble work!'

'But he won't come; and though we all go to visit him in London now and then, he knows nothing of George's work, and just thinks of us as drudging on in a small, poverty-stricken, scrambling sort of way; and he hates the idea of it for any one belonging to himself.'

'I must say I think parents presume upon their prerogative

sometimes,' said Gertrude, 'but all the same we know what our duty as children is.'

'This poverty has developed many a talent in us both, which but for it would have lain dormant, I believe,' said Mrs. Stewart cheerfully. 'Necessity is a good trainer, and a good one to make us work; and I do not believe there is a sweeter emotion than that experienced in the reward for hard, diligent work.'

'Is Mr. Stewart interested in your painting and your scheme?' asked Gertrude.

'Oh yes! he is interested in all my pursuits,' said Mrs. Stewart, with sparkling eyes, 'and it makes everything so light and easy. He is a regular artist himself too. I don't only mean that he can paint, but he is so artistic in all the departments of his own work, both in his sketching of it out and in the way he fills it in and finishes it.'

'He is, indeed; he brings always such a perfect piece of work to the pulpit with him! Mrs. Stewart, I thank God for him, and his preaching and teaching! And what an amount of knowledge he has too! His quotations from classics and authors are so delightful, he is a perfect dungeon of learning; and he sets one thinking. And oh, he does make one feel their lostness, Mrs. Stewart, and the infinite preciousness of a Saviour! What out-of-the-way books he must have!'

'He hasn't a large library,' said Mrs. Stewart, 'but it certainly is a well-chosen one, and what is more, he reads his books.'

'And lends them too,' said Gertrude brightly, 'which is a great boon.'

'How do you like my friend Flavel?' asked Mrs. Stewart as Gertrude returned the volume of which she had had the loan.

'So very, very much. I had no idea these old books were so interesting till you lent me them. I never read anything more heart-settling about one's lot in life than his *Mystery of Providence*. One never thinks as one ought of God's goodness in making us ordinary, passable-looking people, instead of with an arm too many or a leg too few; and then, as he shows

too, the circumstances of our home, and,' in a reverent tone, 'our conversion are all so especially arranged by Him. O Mrs. Stewart, my heart is full of love to Him and to Christ for all their matchless kindness to myself!'

'As mine is too,' said her friend. 'These words are ever in my heart: "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage."'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'There is One who from above
Watches how the still hours move,
Of our day of service done,
From the dawn to setting sun.'

THE little dinner-party this evening at the Fort went off perfectly. The guests were Lady Morell, the Honourable Jack, and Bruce, Kate Murrie, Mr. and Mrs. Yorke Ewing, the two Miss Yorke Ewings and their brother Spencer, together with their visitors Dr. and Mrs. Carnduff from London, and young Carnduff of the —th Regiment.

Lonshire is in all the pride of its summer beauty, and a glorious day in June is closing in an evening of serene loveliness. The Fort is basking in a glow of sunshine. The pretty lodge at the foot of the avenue is covered with white roses, and the children in the little garden are stringing daisies and buttercups, and running after the terrified chickens to hang their garlands round their necks! The old elms and lime-trees form a thick shade in the avenue, up which the carriages are now driving; and as they emerge from it to the broad gravel walk which sweeps round to the door, a chorus of barking and yelping from the numerous dogs, thus suddenly aroused from their drowsy dreams, announces their arrival. The house stands on a slight eminence, and the shrubs are kept low, to give a view of the surrounding country; a well-kept lawn stretches out in front, its edge bristling with time-

honoured cannon; while from it a garden and conservatory, gay with choice plants and flowers, open off. The air is fragrant with the scent of lilacs and pink and white hawthorn, and the birds are singing in the branches.

All the appointments within are elegant, and most comfortable. From the wide hall, so cool with its tiles and ventilators, the drawing-room and dining-room, the library and the parlour, open; each and all furnished with artistic taste, their somewhat sombre and high-art style being enlivened by beautiful plants and flowers.

As Gertrude awaited her guests in the drawing-room, and glanced out on the lovely surroundings of her home, she recalled vividly similar such evenings as this, when the same beauty and luxury had palled upon her, when she had felt like an imprisoned bird fighting against the bars of her golden cage. If ever heart—so thought many—had objects of satisfaction and delight, surely it was hers! Yet a more weary, unsatisfied heart than hers never beat a year ago, testifying to the fact that the heart is too big for all the world, and that having all the world—without God—is to be poor and desolate indeed. But now having Him as her portion, whose are all the wondrous works of creation, she is able to see Him in them all, and to seek to serve Him with His own good and precious gifts.

In that dreary past, as she feels it to have been, she had knowledge of many subjects, but she had within her the deadly ignorance of herself and the cross of Christ. Now the plague of her own heart has, by God's grace, been discovered to her; and as she grows in this knowledge, she is enabled with a corresponding grasp to take hold of the cross of Christ. She has accepted His gift—salvation; she is fighting the battle against inward corruption and outward temptation. She accepts her lot with all its circumstances, as the one her Lord has appointed for her; and all unconsciously to herself, the heavenly light within her is shining, those around her see her good works, and her Lord is glorified in her.

Simmonds, who had made conscience of 'gettin' his lesson,' as he called drumming over Gertrude's words, which were written out in true phonetic characters, did his part well, only making one slip, in the case of the second *entrée*, which he persisted in offering as 'vale grenadiers!' Let it be remembered, however, that in the days of his youth he was a soldier, and the *lapsus linguæ* will be excused!

'If an auld heathen,' he had kept muttering to himself during the day, as he went solemnly about his preparations,—'if an auld heathen cud spake aboot there bein' twa handles to everything, an' aboot aye takin' had o' the richt ane, certaintly a gude Christian shudna be ahint *him!*' And if, in his 'eidentness,' good Simmonds tacked on to the saying of Epictetus his personal preference for the right handle, it was a deduction, at any rate, which helped him.

Everybody was charming,—if the secret of being charming consists in appearing charmed,—and the dinner and service were perfect. Gertrude, in her cool, clinging dress, with crimson roses in her hair, looked lovely, and those who knew her best were struck with the softened charm of her manner—the effect of her growing humility, and the evident forgetfulness of self in her desire to minister to others. In dress and manners she was in striking contrast to the Miss Yorke Ewings, whose stout figures might have been toned somewhat by quiet, dark dresses, but who, in the glory of pink silks, and handsome but rather *prononcé* gold ornaments, looked hot and heavy. Their friends, Dr. and Mrs. Carnduff, were in great admiration of the Fort generally, and of Gertrude especially; young Carnduff, who, Ellinor Yorke Ewing had hoped, was favourably disposed towards herself, 'taking up,' as she called it, with Gertrude in a way very unfriendly to her stout self.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, they stood at the bay-window, watching the lights and shadows on the hills; and while Lady Morell minutely described the various places of interest, Gertrude had a few words with Kate, who

now looked so unlike the hunted, depressed creature she once had been.

'Father has reached all safe,' Kate is saying in a low tone, 'and likes the look of the people and the place!'

'Kate! I am *so* thankful,' answered Gertrude, while a look of intense gladness irradiated her face.

'How you ever came to think of such a plan I can't imagine, and to get so much money in such a quiet way too. Father is so fond of farming, you know; and Dr. Clarridge has a very fine farm, and if only he is kept busy, I am not afraid of him. O Gertrude, God will bless you!' and the tears gathered in her eyes.

'It was Lady Morell who helped, and she is so fond of you, Kate!' said Gertrude.

'Ever since I began to pray, and to trust Jesus,' she said in a hushed, reverent tone, 'things have brightened. Oh!' glancing out into the glorious world, 'is it not amazing to think that He who created all that cares for us in such a minute way?'

'It is; it makes me love Him so; and we come to *know* it in a quite different way from reading about it when we feel it here,' pressing her hand to her heart, 'and get the answers to our prayers.'

'Yes, indeed; but *I* have everything yet to learn, only I am happier than ever I have been, a—n—d long to serve Him.'

'Gerty, sing us something,' said Lady Morell, as, having exhausted her descriptions of peak and vale, as well as the patience of her audience, she permitted them to look about for seats. 'Gerty,' to Mrs. Carnduff, 'doesn't, like most girls, refuse to sing till the gentlemen come in.'

'Yes, Aunt Julia,' said Gertrude, 'but please first let me show the ladies some of my pretty things.'

'Ah, to be sure, you have lots of them always on hand; quite a bazaar she keeps,' smiling.

Gertrude produced her fans and plates.

'Such beauties!' exclaimed Lady Morell, pressing forward

eagerly to see them. 'You must have made a perfect fortune for your friend by this time, Gerty. You have been at this business for months past.'

'There is still more wanted,' said Gertrude, laughing, as she threw herself into the attitude of show-woman, and held up the fans.

'They *are* beautiful,' said Mrs. Carnduff. 'I have promised, greatly against my will, to take a stall at a bazaar for a cottage hospital in Middlesex next autumn, and I'm just looking out for some suitable things. I'll take three of the fans, Miss Ellerslie, and three of these charming glove-boxes. Dear me! what a saving of thought and anxiety to have got these pretty things just for the buying!'

Mrs. Yorke Ewing took several boxes and two fans, and Gertrude was playfully holding up the last to the highest bidder, when the gentlemen appeared.

'Go—going!' she was saying, when the Honourable Jack, putting up his eye-glass, took in the situation, for it was by no means the first time he had seen Gerty at this work during the past season. Mr. Carnduff evinced great interest in the sale, and asked what the last 'bid' was, immediately adding a sovereign.

'It's not really worth that, Mr. Carnduff,' said Gertrude. 'I can't let you be imposed upon, even to advance my pet scheme. Add five shillings, and the fan is yours!'

'Done!' he cried, as he held out his hand to receive it.

Jack frowned; he was always frowning when Gertrude was civil even to other men. She certainly treated him coldly enough, now more than ever fearful of encouraging hopes which could never be realized.

'Haven't you anything more left, Gerty?' he asked in a sort of confidential whisper.

'Nothing.'

'I asked you to keep a glove-box for me out of your next lot.'

'Did you? I quite forgot, then.'

'What are you reading just now?'

'Very little, I am sorry to say.'

'Oh! so you say; but you're always reading!'

'I have been busy with some of Ruskin's works, and Miss Rosetti's book on Dante, and going over Plutarch's *Lives;* and I've had the loan of such an interesting book by Flavel.'

'Travels! do you like travels?'

'Flavel. He is quite a new writer to me, but I have been delighted with him.'

'Flavel—Flavel?'

'Oh! I'm sure you never heard of him; but I advise you to read his *Mystery of Providence.* You never read anything like it.'

'He'll be against chance or luck, or'—

'Luck! what is luck?' exclaimed Gertrude. 'Mr. Stewart defines it as a mere fancy name for being always at your post, and so ready when the good time comes.'

'He's a wonderful man Mr. Stewart,' said Jack. 'I was in his church on Sunday morning. I—I thought you would be there. It was full,—people from great distances come to it. He was lecturing on Saul, and, do you know, he told us solemnly that the beginning of Saul's fall and ruin was Samuel's want of punctuality. He didn't keep his appointment, and Saul went to work himself, thinking he wasn't coming. I could hardly believe it, but I turned up the passage, and there, to be sure, it was. He'll be a great man yet!'

'He *is* a great man,' said Gertrude.

'But I mean he'll get a larger church, and be more known and thought of than in a little out-of-the-way place like Hilton.'

'He is trying to do his duty where he is, and not troubling himself about what may be coming,' said Gertrude. 'He is a grand man.'

'They're all sold,' said Kate, coming up to Gertrude.

'Kate?' in delight.

'Yes. Mrs. Yorke Ewing has bought up the rest for birthday presents!'

'O Mrs. Ewing,' said Gertrude, springing forward, 'how kind! are you sure you really want all these?'

'Want them, my dear! I'm only too thankful to get them. All our girls' birthdays are coming on, and some of our nieces' too, and I was just meditating a run into Edinburgh about their presents; but in this hot weather it's not pleasant. So, if I may have all these,' gathering them together, 'I'll be for ever obliged to you.'

Gertrude's heart was full. In obedience to Lady Morell's repeated request, she now went to the piano, and sang her favourite 'Rest in the Lord.'

Her audience was thrilled, not more by the rich, bird-like voice, than by the deep pathos which breathed through the words. Everything, outside and in, had a sort of dewy twilight hush over it—a witching hour for music—yes, and for reflection too.

'It's perfectly heavenly,' said young Carnduff, who stood gazing at Gertrude as she poured out her soul; 'sing another, please, Miss Ellerslie.'

'Don't you sing?' she asked of him.

'Oh, I sing a little, but not after that'—

'Do,' said Gertrude. 'Here are some of my brother's songs,' lifting Fred's 'Pilot' and 'Vagabond.' 'I would like to hear them again. How I wish Fred had been here, Mr. Carnduff; but he won't be home till next month. He'll be Doctor then. He has passed all his exams., and has only to be capped now! He's been *so* diligent!'

'Where will he settle then?'

'Oh, we don't know; I hope he'll take a good holiday before he settles anywhere. I miss him so dreadfully.'

'Have you more brothers, Miss Ellerslie?'

'One in Australia, my eldest brother, but he never comes home, and doesn't write very often. He was set upon going to a new country, and being free from what he called the

shackles of society. He won't ever come nome now, my father thinks. I scarcely remember him, it's so long since he went away. But Fred is—oh, he is everything one wants in a brother!' she added enthusiastically.

'Happy man to have the love of such a sister!' Lionel could not help saying.

'Happy sister rather to have such a brother!' said Gertrude, smiling, and her mind relapsed into the habitual longing and yearning she had after him and his best interests.

Rousing herself, she said, 'Will you try one of these songs?'

Mr. Carnduff did not know either of them, but his performance of 'Brown Eyes and Blue' was creditable, helped through, as it was, by Gertrude's accompaniment.

'Ah! there is "The Arrow and the Song,"' he exclaimed; 'sing that, pray,' and he placed it before her.

'You gave us two more verses than are here,' he said, as she finished; 'and how pretty they are!'

'It seemed to want something; and although it was presumptuous to tack anything on to Longfellow, I couldn't help it,' she said simply. Here is the song, with Gertrude's additional lines. The reader may like to have them.

Music by H. W. BALFE. Poetry by LONGFELLOW.

I shot an arrow into the air.
It fell to earth I know not where;
For so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air.
It fell to earth I knew not where;
For who hath sight so keen and strong
That it can follow the flight of a song?

Long, long afterward in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke;
And the song from beginning to end
I found again in the heart of a friend.

GERTRUDE'S LINES.

I heaved a sigh; the wafting air
Threw it afar no one knew where.
More it would need than eagle's eye
The path to follow of the faintest sigh.

I breathed a prayer; it pierced the air,
It upward flew, I scarce knew where;
But peace through all my spirit stole,
As when on ocean billows cease to roll.

Not long afterward in the breeze
The sigh was rustling in the trees;
And the prayer had reached the throne on high,
And blessings brought, like showers from summer's sky,

'You seem to *feel* the words, Miss Ellerslie, especially the last.'

'I do indeed,' said Gertrude heartily.

'How different you are from—fr—om—other young ladies,' he ventured to say. 'I feel as if you had some secret within you which makes you—independent—shall I say?—of things that others are posting and panting after!'

'Did you ever read that?' said Gertrude, lifting a small volume from the table.

'*The Secret of True Happiness*,' as he read the title. 'No, but I wish I knew it.'

'You may have the loan of the book if you like,' said Gertrude.

'May I? thank you,' as he put it into his pocket.

'Gerty,' said Miss Ellinor Ewing, whose secret upbraidings against Mr. Carnduff for his 'desertion to the enemy' could no longer be controlled, 'I hope you are going to the Kilbarton Charity Ball?'

'I hope sincerely I am not,' answered Gertrude.

'Not! Miss Ellerslie,' said Lionel Carnduff, 'can it hold without you?'

Miss Ellinor felt furious, but said quietly, 'You must know, Mr. Carnduff, that Miss Ellerslie is becoming too good

for such frivolities. I hoped, however, sne would make an exception in favour of this ball—it is for a charity!'

'For people's own amusement!' said Gertrude; 'like a lady I once saw eating ices at a bazaar, who said gravely, "I'm doing this for the benefit of the good object."'

Miss Ellinor knew Lionel's passion for dancing, and hoped, by this adroit discovery of 'Gertrude's crotchets,' to rouse his prejudices against her.

But he said, 'Pray tell me your views, Miss Ellerslie.'

'She's too good for such things now,' said Miss Yorke Ewing.

'You *know* that's not true, Ellinor,' said Gertrude, with a flash in her eye. 'It's because I'm too bad and too weak that I can't go to things like that without getting and doing harm. Other people are stronger, and don't take on as I do!'

'Is that your only reason?' asked Lionel.

'My chief reason, but I grudge the time dreadfully.'

'She works herself terribly,' said Ellinor. 'I tell her she'll kill herself with her study and her Sunday-class, and her visiting, and one thing and another. It's such drudgery-work, too, for a girl in your position, Gertrude.'

'It's such happy work!' said Gertrude, gliding away to speak to the others. 'I only wish you knew how *much happier* it is than the old worldly selfish existence of the past.'

And Lionel Carnduff thought if health and happiness met anywhere on earth, they centred in this beautiful and bewitchingly out-of-the-way girl! He determined to look into the book, and try to find for himself 'the secret of true happiness.'

After their friends were gone, and while Colonel Ellerslie ruminated pleasantly over the success of the entertainment, Gertrude counted her money. She was astonished at the sum realized. 'This will bring it up to what Mrs. Stewart said she must have before they could write to secure a place for Dermid!' she soliloquized, with sparkling eyes. 'How glad

and astonished she will be! I will put it up for her now, and send it by John when he drives Papa to Kilbarton to-morrow morning.'

She made up her packet, enclosing a few words of loving congratulation to Mrs. Stewart on the success so far of her scheme. Then she bade her father good-night; and if he did not commend her for her painstaking to please him, she had the testimony within her that she had tried not only to gratify him, but to do heartily, as unto her Father in heaven, what her hand had found to do.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'Is that a death-bed where the Christian lies?
Yes, but not his; 'tis death itself then dies.'

AT the breakfast-table next morning, when the post came in, Simmonds said to Gertrude, as he handed her her letters, 'One from Maister Fred, mem.' 'Ah!' said Gertrude, and lifting the others, she laid them on the table, while she eagerly opened her brother's. 'Papa,' she gasped, after reading it, 'Fred is ill; he's coming home to-day!'

'Fred?' laying down his newspaper.

'Yes. He says,' referring to his letter, 'that he only has a cough; but that summer colds are difficult to get rid of somehow; and the Professor advises him to come home for a few days.'

'Oh, that's all!' taking up his paper.

'But,' said Gertrude, 'it's so near the end of the session, and the capping, and everything, that—th—at surely—oh, he can't be very ill!'

'What train does he say he's coming by?'

'The one due at Kilbarton at four.'

'I'll go to the station, and pick him up after the school-board meeting!'

'Here is a P.S.,' said Gertrude.

'If you could have the close carriage, please, the dog-cart jolts so.'

Gertrude's heart sank. Fred wanting the close carriage, in a

day in summer too! oh, he *must* be really ill! How she longed to go and meet him; but it would give more room if she stayed at home. So with a heavy heart she saw her father start, and thought of the hours that must elapse before she should see Fred and know the truth about him.

They had not met since that autumn morning when he had rattled off to his work, so bright, and kind, and hopeful.

'O Fred!' she kept saying, as she went about her preparations for him; 'if anything were really the matter with you, what would become of me?'

Well for her that she knows now where to cast her burden, and to seek grace and strength 'for the evil hour;' for as we turn over this leaf of a new chapter, we open the page of a new and painful experience in her life's history.

The whole house was stirred by the sad news. Fred was beloved by all, and everything that devotion could devise to make his home-coming bright and pleasant was put in train.

His rooms were gay with white curtains and flowers; his books were arranged as he liked them. Fly and Wasp were told, at least twenty times, that he was 'coming home;' and to judge by their vociferous barking, and by their yelping communication of the good news to their brothers and sisters, it was a source of universal delight to the entire dog fraternity!

Long before the time he could possibly arrive, Gertrude had taken up her position at the drawing-room window, to watch at a particular bend of the road for the first glimpse of the carriage.

There at last it came; and knowing the dislike her father had to all fuss, she restrained herself from rushing down the avenue to meet them; but when the carriage stopped at the door, her hands let down the steps, and her hungry eyes fastened with a look of painful eagerness on Fred's face.

He looked tired, but not nearly so ill as she had worked herself up into fearing.

'Well, Fred,' she cried, in as cheerful a tone as she could muster, 'how are you?'

'First-rate, Gerty,' as he took her in his arms and kissed her, 'and,' in a whisper, 'so awfully glad to b—e beside you again! How jolly everything looks!' glancing round the drawing-room. 'Ah! Fly, Wasp!' as they all tore in after him, each claiming a share of his attention. 'Now, now, good dogs,' after a little, 'wait a bit,' and he threw himself wearily on the sofa while Gerty called them off, and brought him some tea. A fit of coughing came on, a very severe 'tussle,' as Fred called it.

'I'd better go up-stairs,' he said on recovering; 'it takes it out of me so.' He looked spent and deadly pale, and Gertrude, whose hopes had been fast rising, felt greatly alarmed.

'I'll just lie down a bit,' he said brightly as Gertrude followed him to his room. 'A—nd I'll not come down to dinner, Gerty, the governor couldn't stand this coughing.'

Gerty did not speak; her heart was too full. She got him comfortably laid upon the sofa, and busied herself in arranging his things. Presently he said, 'Could I,—it seems absurd, but do you know it's colder here than in Edinburgh,—could I have a fire, Gerty?'

'Oh yes! Fred; but it's so hot to-night.'

'Perhaps the long drive has chilled me; it'll soon go off.' He closed his eyes wearily, murmuring before he fell off into a dose, 'I'll be better after a bit of a nap!'

Gertrude knelt beside him. She could look at him now as he lay in this fitful sort of sleep. Ah, he was changed! He was sadly thin, his once plump face was sunken and had a pinched look about it, while a suspicious bright spot burned on each cheek, and contrasted terribly with the clear paleness of his skin. His black, curly hair, of which Gerty was so proud, made a fine setting for the dear and beautiful face. Yes, it was Fred, but not the Fred of bygone happy days. Fancy *him* lying on a sofa! shaking off the dogs! What a weight fell on Gerty's heart as all this passed through her mind! What was it all? what did it mean? what might it all be tending to? She could not tell; she only knew that a change was over him, and that the old, wild, happy days of their childhood

were far away back in the past! Presently he turned and opened his eyes.

'I was dreaming, Gerty,' as he laid his hand quietly in hers. 'I seem to see things so clearly in my sleep.'

'Dreaming, Fred?' as she took his hand in both of hers.

'Yes; I thought you an—d'—

'Rose?' said Gerty, knowing nothing of what had passed, and unconscious of the pain which the mere mention of her name caused him.

A flush passed over his face, leaving it the next moment white and cold.

'Yes; but,' rousing himself as if to make a great exertion, 'we won't speak of *her*, after I have told you all, Gerty'—

'Fred?'

Then he told her all. He had never been able to write about it to her; but what an ease it was to pour it into her sympathizing ear, blaming himself for his infatuation in supposing that a girl like her should care for him, but simply expressing his belief that she had all along known his love for her, and had loved him back again.

'And so she did, Fred!' exclaimed Gerty, flashing up, 'and she was as good as engaged to you before she left, if not actually engaged.'

'Yes, she was, but'—

'But she has broken her faith, and broken your heart, Fred!' in an agony of distress.

'No, no! it was the cold air that dreadful night in Paris, Gerty,' and he shivered at the remembrance of it. 'I had a cold, and something struck my heart, and I have never been well since. Professor Schneiders says it's just a neglected cold, and that with rest and home I'll soon be all right. But it *is* a sell, so near the end of the session. If only I could have stayed it out! It's hard lines!'

'So it looks, Fred,' said Gerty, 'but,' bending her face, 'it will be all right.'

'Do you think so?' eagerly, mistaking her meaning. He knew Gerty always said exactly what she thought, and was true as gold.

'But she's engaged to that fellow Egerton!'

'Egerton?'

'So every one says. He's mad about her, of course; any way, she's given *me* up!'

'Fred! Lady Morell had a letter from her saying that Egerton was in love with a brunette in Paris, but th—at—th—at they couldn't be married yet, or something.' She wouldn't repeat to *him* even the scandal of that letter.

'Ah! it is just her way of putting it, Gerty. *She* is the brunette, and *he* is rich and great, a—nd, ah! all Paris was talking of it when I was there!'

'Fred!'

'And I saw them—saw them together, there's no doubt about it,' wearily. 'Now I'll go to sleep again, I'm so tired, Gerty. We meet in dreamland, our only meeting-place now.' What alarm filled poor Gerty's heart as she sat watching Fred in his fitful sleep! A perfect tumult of passionate indignation swept over her, against her who had blighted Fred's hopes—his life, perhaps.

She stayed her bursting heart on Him to whom now she carried all her burdens, and He helped her. Gradually she grew calmer, and some gleams of hope peered through the darkness! He was home. She was beside him, and she could pray for him.

Next morning the doctor, to whom the Professor had written particulars of Fred's case, arrived. Gertrude waited for his verdict in a state of mingled hope and fear. Dr. Wright was their friend as well as their family doctor, and had known them all their lives. It had not often fallen to his lot to give such a hopeless opinion of a patient, and it pained him to his heart. He made a most careful examination of poor Fred; Colonel Ellerslie waited for him in his study. Gertrude, who paced noiselessly up and down the corridor, met him at Fred's door as he left the room.

'Well, Dr. Wright?' with a piercing glance.

He put her hand within his arm, and walked a few steps without speaking.

'Is he ill, Dr. Wright—*very* ill?' stopping suddenly.

'Most seriously.'

'But he'll get better?' with a cry of pain.

'As long as there's life there's hope, you know, my dear child.'

'But'—

'I'm thankful he's home.'

'What is it?' in a piteous tone.

'Can you bear to hear it? You must try for his sake to calm yourself.'

'Yes, yes.'

'Well, if he lives a month, it is all I'—

'Dr. Wright!' cried Gertrude; 'Fred? my Fred—ah! no no!'

He took her to the drawing-room, and made her sit down. 'You made me promise to tell you.'

'Yes, oh yes! *thank* you, but I can't bear it yet,' she added, in a crushed tone, 'Papa, poor Papa!'

'Ah, yes, I must go to him.'

The doctor knew that if left alone she would get relief in tears, and he left her.

And a great burst of weeping came to her relief; then the thought that the moments were speeding on—the moments that *he* would be with them before he went away—gave a strange sort of nerve to her. She grudged each one spent away from him. Ah! and what a work for him opened up before her! With a cry for help and guidance, she rose to return to Fred's room.

At the door she met her father. He was pale, and a slight tremor was in his voice as he said, 'Dr. Wright tells me Fred is very ill, Gerty. He says he must be most carefully nursed.'

'And does he think he may'—the rest of the words died away on her lips.

'He says his sufferings may be greatly alleviated by good

ventilation in his room, regular nourishment at stated intervals, and no excitement. I'm just going to see Mrs. Cookson about the soup he is to get. John will drive into Kilbarton for the medicines, and can bring all she needs.'

Colonel Ellerslie went off to give his orders. Gertrude went to Fred.

As she entered his room, his eyes, which had been watching wistfully for her, met hers. She saw at a glance that he knew all. She sat down beside him as he lay on the sofa, but not a word would come.

'Gerty,' he said presently, 'the doctor says I'm very, very ill.'

'Yes, darling.'

'I'm three-quarters of a doctor myself, you know,' with a faint smile; 'and I *think* he's mistaken. I'm ever so much better since I came home, and I've only been one night, you know.'

Gertrude was silent.

'If only the cough wasn't so hard on me, and if I'd only a little more strength, I'd be all right, Gerty.'

'I fear not, Fred,' with a beating heart.

'It's such awful hard lines! There's all the other fellows as hearty and jolly as you like, able for everything, and I'm shunted, idle, useless. Gerty, I'm so very tired!' and he laid his head wearily down. Presently he looked up. 'Aren't you going for a walk, Gerty? It's such a bright day, do, and I'll dose away here till you come back.'

Gertrude had one place she longed to go to, so she said, 'Very well, Fred; Simmonds will bring you your soup, and I won't be long.'

Just as she was leaving the room, Bruce met her. He did not wait to ask any questions, he had already heard all from the doctor, and he saw she was not equal to speaking, so he pressed on to Fred himself. He had come over at once on hearing he was home, and said he would sit with him while Gerty went out.

Fred was pleased to see him,—he was at home with him;

and Bruce's innate tact and delicacy of feeling served him in good stead with the invalid.

Gertrude set out straight for the manse. As she walked along—flew along rather—she saw nothing, heard nothing of the glorious outside world, so absorbed was she in her thoughts about Fred. Mrs. Stewart was out, and Mr. Stewart, into whose study she was shown, was scared with her look. Every drop of colour seemed out of her face, and the eager, agonized look in her eyes was painful in its intensity.

'Mr. Stewart,' she said, going up to him, 'I've come to you. *Fred is dying, and he's not saved.*'

He made her sit down. She said not another word, but fixed her eyes—those true, tender, beautiful eyes—full upon him, and waited for him to speak.

'Is he very ill?'

'Oh yes! and he has only a month to—t—o—l—ive!' She uttered the words with the energy of one determined to make the case known, whatever it might cost herself.

'Does he know anything of'—

'He knows nothing of the way of life, Mr. Stewart—of Jesus as his Saviour. A dearer, nobler, and I believe a finer moral character does not exist. But we know that is not enough! He is dying! my Fred is dying!' in a tone that wrung the pastor's heart, 'and he's not saved!'

'Solemn, indeed, Miss Ellerslie! But God's grace and Spirit are omnipotent.'

'Yes; and He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. I've been repeating these words all the way along, and recalling what you said in your sermon about them. But then, on his side, Mr. Stewart, he must turn to Christ, and to tell him this, to put all this before him, some one must do it! O Mr. Stewart, will *you?*'

'God helping me, I will.'

'Thank you, oh, thank you!'

Gertrude little knew how she had endeared herself to the

pastor and his family, nor how deep was their interest in her. She only knew that he had been the means of inestimable blessing to her, and she turned from all other instruments to him, for Fred, in the great and urgent needs of his soul.

Many would have hesitated before taking such a direct step. The doctor enjoined quietness, and freedom from excitement; her father was fastidious, and might not care for a clergyman coming much about the house; but Gertrude thought of nothing but of the tremendous and urgent concerns of her brother's soul, and turned straight to the friend she believed most capable of helping him.

'I expect Mr. Stewart, Fred, this afternoon,' she said, as she sat beside him. 'I want you to see him.'

'All right, Gerty. He must be a fine sort of man from what you have told me in your letters about him. He gave a lecture in Edinburgh, and the Professors think him one of the most rising men of the day.'

What a relief to Gerty was this frank readiness to see him! Fred was delighted with Mr. Stewart. His manliness and kindness won his heart, and the few words he spoke to him sank into his soul. The visit was short, but he promised to return soon. Bruce came constantly, and ministered to Fred's wants, chatting pleasantly to him without wearying him, and helping Gertrude in the countless duties of the sick-room; and truly theirs was a ministry of love, and they were as one in their deep concern about Fred's soul. How many would have said that all must be well with such an upright, amiable young man! How they would have spoken of him as ready to die, because of the blamelessness of his life and the lovableness of his disposition! But *they* knew better; they knew experimentally that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' and their prayers and labours concentrated on this great change being accomplished in Fred. That God's Holy Spirit alone could work this change they were assured, but of the fact that He usually works by means—human means—they were equally convinced.

Mr. Stewart's first efforts were directed to the work of convincing Fred that he was a sinner. He did not feel this, indeed had thought little on the subject, but gradually, from God's own Word, to which his heart came to respond, he was made to feel the gulf which his sins had made between him and God, that Holy God into whose presence he now knew he was so soon to enter.

'Gerty,' he said one evening, as after having lain a long time silent he opened his eyes, 'how different things look when you're ill and laid aside. I don't seem to mind about the things I cared for so much, and I feel that I have been a great sinner. How selfish and awfully worldly I have been, really living on as if there was no God; the fear of death hanging like the sword of Damocles over my head, and interfering often with my enjoyment of things, but no love, not a spark of it, towards God! Isn't it a wonder He has put up with me so long?'

'Indeed it is,' said Gerty, whose heart leapt with thankfulness at this evident token of the work of grace in his heart. 'Nothing surprises me more than the patience and forbearance of God with us.'

'Your letters, Gerty, made me *think* a good deal. I have been feeling that you have got something that I haven't, that seems to make you happy, and so good and kind,' he added enthusiastically, as he looked tenderly at her; 'but I never had time, or never took time, to ponder the thing, and I've been thinking that God has laid me down here just to give me time, perhaps.'

'Indeed He has, I am sure.'

'Mr. Stewart speaks so plainly to me. He has told me things that I knew nothing about; but, Gerty, it has been making me feel so queer and unhappy. And when I told him that to-day, and that the weaker I was getting the more afraid of death and the hereafter I was becoming, he spoke of Christ, and told me to try hard to fix my mental eye upon Him, and told me how He had gone through all His terrible sufferings

just on purpose to save us; wasn't it wonderful? Christ seemed to me so different after his talk, so real, and so human and kind, as well as so great and gracious!'

'Such a personal Saviour, meeting all our wants, Fred!'

'Yes; and the Bible isn't dry when you come to read it for help. Mr. Stewart told me to-day to read the first chapter of St. John, and to keep thinking over it, and praying over it, till he comes back. And I've been trying. You might read it, Gerty; I like to hear you read.'

With what thankfulness she read! and what a sweet talk they had over it!

'It seems to me,' said Mr. Stewart to Gertrude at the end of three weeks, 'as if, while men sleep, the word grows in Frederick's heart. He is not far from the kingdom of God.'

'O Mr. Stewart, what can I say? It would need to be quick work. How spent he is! how rapidly worse he has got! But God is gracious. He has indeed heard our prayers!'

'If,' said Mr. Stewart, as he bade her good-bye, '"two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."'

The work of grace went steadily on in Fred's heart, and the means for this great end were unremittingly employed. His anxiety about his soul became very great; but his faith in Christ grew and strengthened until he was able to commit himself unreservedly into His faithful and loving hands.

His father was struck with the change; and Lady Morell, who saw him occasionally, was deeply touched by the earnestness of his spirit, and the happy frame of mind he revealed.

Kate Murrie came constantly to see Gertrude, whose wonderful anxiety about Fred's soul convinced her powerfully of the reality of the change which must pass over each renewed heart. She knew the perfect devotion of Gertrude's love for Fred, and the agony she was suffering in his growing weakness and the certain issue of his sickness; but all personal feeling was suppressed in the anguish of her heart about his soul. The eagerness with which he looked forward to Mr. Stewart's visits

was touching. Any point of difficulty was reserved for him to explain, and any mist of doubt was sure to be cleared away by him!

'What I owe to Mr. Stewart, Gerty!' he said one day; 'and how delightful to think we shall meet above! We'll have time there to talk over all God's gracious dealings with us here!'

His peace flowed like a river, and, contrary to the doctor's expectations, he lingered on a few weeks more. It seemed as if the calm which came over his spirit preserved his vitality. Not a murmur escaped his dear, patient lips, and his gratitude for the love and care heaped upon him was very great.

'I should like to have lived a year, Gerty,' he said to her one evening at the close of one of their talks, 'to show the reality of my faith, and my heart's love for my Saviour; but He knows best.'

The night before his death a great wave of doubt rolled over his spirit. Gertrude, on taking her place beside him, as usual, after the doctor had paid his evening visit, found him in darkness and distress.

'Gerty, what if I'm deceiving myself? Is it not possible that I have come too late to Jesus? that I have sinned too long? that all my peace has been a false peace?' and he fixed his black eyes piercingly upon her.

'If your trust was on anything about yourself, Fred, there might be room for doubt.'

'Some one has been whispering to me that I'm not pardoned —not saved!'

Gerty repeated one promise after another, but no light dawned. His distress was terrible, and lasted long. At length she said, 'Fred, the closing words of the Bible are a message from Christ in heaven, of invitation and promise to sinners—the same as He spoke to them when down here: 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely.'

'Gerty, Gerty!' exclaimed Fred, as he drank in the words,

and a bright light spread over his face, 'Not another word—shut the book—Gerty—that's enough — enough. I need nothing more—my Lord and my Saviour.'

He lay quiet and peaceful, and not another cloud dimmed his spirit. It seemed as if Satan had reserved till the last moments of weakness his deadliest shaft; but the sword of the Spirit was mightier, and made him give back.

Next morning it was plain he was sinking. Dr. Wright said he could not live out the day. It was a still September morning. The windows were open to let in any air that blew. One could hear the soft rustle of the autumn leaves as they fell upon the lawn, and the plaintive twitter of the birds. Fly and Wasp had licked for the last time the thin, white hands held out so lovingly towards them, and were going out and in the room noiselessly, as if aware that some cloud hung over the house. Kneeling beside Fred was Gerty, who now and then moistened his parched lips, while Mr. Stewart, on his other side, breathed a word of promise into his eager ear. Colonel Ellerslie, who was terribly unnerved and overcome by the solemn scene, was constantly obliged to leave the room to control his feelings, while Bruce had a hard struggle to keep down his grief. Simmonds and the old nurse stood behind wiping their eyes. Just when the watchers thought that Fred had closed his eyes for ever on earth, he opened them once more, and seeing them all round him, he raised himself, and held out his hand to each, saying a few words of loving farewell. The old servants rushed from the room, broken down with the scene. Gerty, to whom he spoke last, and who seemed lost to everything around her except Fred, and that she was looking on him, listening to him for the last time, gazed on him with a trembling heart, but for his sake with self-controlled composure. He bent his lips on her dear, beautiful, wistful face, and murmured, 'Gerty! what you have been to me! But we shall meet soon, and be together for ever and for ever and for ever with the Lord!'

Withdrawing his face from hers, he leant back, as if done

with earth, and remained apparently in prayer. Suddenly he roused himself and gazed upwards, his eyes fixing themselves in rapt absorption on some—to all but himself—unseen vision. The watchers scarcely breathed, afraid to break in on such a wondrous scene. Fred, with his pale, sunken face, and black hair falling round his tired head, was seeing—what? A marvellous look of mingled awe and sadness overspread his face; two large tears stood in his black eyes; then with a start he threw up his arms, and clasping his hands, stretched them upwards, while a light—a heavenly light—irradiated his countenance, chasing away the cloud, and illuminating his whole frame with a look of transport and of victory. With his eyes still fixed, and with the glow as it seemed of heaven over him, he fell quietly back into Gerty's arms—and was gone.

'God has answered our prayers exceeding abundantly above all we could have asked or thought,' said Mr. Stewart.

'What did he see?' asked Gertrude, as she laid the dear head gently down, and closed the glistening eyes.

'His Saviour, I believe,' said Mr. Stewart. 'I have read of young Christians being blessed with such a sight of Christ, and such a foretaste of glory. They have so much to leave and part with here, it is so hard for the young to die, and God, in His infinite graciousness, gives them, as it were, glory before they are quite done with grace. I thank Him for the privilege of witnessing such a triumphant death-bed.'

CHAPTER XXX.

'When some belovèd voice, that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly;
And silence, against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new,—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count. Not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew;
Nor songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet "All hails,"
Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.'

GERTRUDE, in her anxiety about Fred, and her thankfulness for all God's goodness to him and her, had not allowed herself to think of her own desolation. But when she had to exchange the hallowed influences of his sick-room for the everyday duties of ordinary life, ah! it needed all her faith and courage to face them in a right spirit. Into them all, however, she threw herself with devotion, sustained by an unseen but most real Presence. Standing in the midst of a great suffering world, what was she that, because the joy of her own life was gone, and because the grey twilight had settled down in her sky, she should fold her hands and nurse her grief? Nay, there were many duties left to be performed, many suffering and weary onès to whom even her hand stretched out might carry relief. She would try, at least. And

'The quality of mercy is not strained, . . .
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;'

and by her eager desire to comfort her father, who for the time was crushed by this sudden blow; to help on the Murries and Mrs. Stewart in their hard battles; to cheer Lady Morell; together with her domestic cares, her studies, the charge of her Sunday class, and the numberless calls which ever come to a generous and sympathizing heart, Gertrude unconsciously helped on the healing work in her own sad spirit. Yet only those who have known human life in the brightness of companionship and love can imagine the blank in her home and heart!

Every walk and tree was charged with memories of the dear departed one. In imagination she heard his ringing voice in the air, and saw him on the moor with the dogs at his heel! Ah, well! but she could rise from all earthly memories to the contemplation of him in that land, the inhabitants of which no more say, 'I am sick,' and where there are 'pleasures for evermore.' Her spirit became chastened and softened; she could understand sorrow in others now, and solitude of heart; but she could testify that He in whom she trusted blessed and satisfied her with His love. And if now and then her thoughts would stray to the friend who had been the means of such untold blessings to them both, she trained them to the contemplation of a meeting hereafter, when, amid the joys of heaven, it might be given to her to talk over with Egerton the story of their lives here, and to have sweet intercourse together.

Thus the weeks wore away, and Christmas again drew near. Dr. Wright had urged Colonel Ellerslie to take Gertrude for a complete change abroad, but he would not listen to it. She was well, but her complexion was so dazzlingly clear, with the loveliest rosy tint in her cheeks, that had she had any trace of delicacy about her, the good doctor would have taken fright. But there was no such trace, and he was forced to give in.

It was the week before Christmas, and clear, frosty weather. Colonel Ellerslie had gone to Kilbarton to a school-board meeting. How many times Gerty mentally blessed the school board! And she started for Garnlee, intending to come round

by the Manse. Her father, whose recreations generally took their rise from the cookery-book, and who had sufficiently recovered his spirits to have ordered a few of the latest hygienic manuals from London and Paris, had this morning arranged with her their usual Christmas gifts and dinners for 'the people on the place.' She had gone with him minutely into all these, and was not a little startled and delighted when he said, 'As we can't have the Morells, except Bruce, with us on Christmas Day to share our family dinner, do you think Mr. and Mrs. Stewart would care to join us?'

'How I should like it!' Gerty exclaimed, flushing with pleasure.

'Ask them, then.'

'And Kate?' suggested Gerty, having a reason of her own for adding her name.

Colonel Ellerslie had formed a very high esteem for Mr. Stewart during his visits to Fred. He never could clearly make out how he ever came to find his way into Fred's room, but that, once there, he had been an unspeakable blessing and comfort to his dying son he was sure; and sickness and death make lasting friendships between the most contrary natures. He liked his fearless, manly spirit, combined as it was with a marvellous refinement and tenderness of feeling; and the notice which his talents as well as his devotion to his work were everywhere creating, had its own share of influence over a mind like the Colonel's. Mrs. Stewart, by her engaging, lady-like manners and accomplishments, had scarcely less favourably impressed him.

As Gertrude walked down the avenue to Garnlee, she was struck with the improvement in little things all over the place. The gate which, on her first visit to the Murries nearly a year ago, had ached on its hinges, was shut, and had a look of white paint about it, a little smeared perhaps, as if done by a child's hand, but still clean. The big stones were all away; and when she rang the bell, poor little Grizzel, rigged out in a cap and apron, which added quite a dozen years to her appearance,

opened the door with a conscious smirk which seemed to say, 'It's me, though you would hardly believe it.' Carruthers and Kate sat in the schoolroom, absorbed over a terrifying quantity of stockings; but there was a good fire blazing, and the whole aspect of things was improved.

Flo, it must be confessed, stood on a chair in the corner with a rather begrimed-looking little face, but her quarter (of an hour) was just out, and as she jumped down, and flew into Gertrude's arms, the smiles triumphed over the tears which had never quite made up their minds whether to flow or not.

Kate was perhaps the most improved of all the family in looks and manner since Gertrude knew them. Perfectly neat in her inexpensive stuff dress, with little collar and cuffs, her shining hair and wonderfully thoughtful grey eyes set off a face which otherwise, from its sallow complexion and irregular features, would certainly have been called plain. But it was the expression which was so changed; the hard, defiant look had given place to one of hope and contentment, and her manners had much of that ready thoughtfulness for others about them characteristic of a self-forgetful spirit.

Carruthers was pretty much as usual, nearly as black and hard-bested looking as ever, and full of regrets that she had not yielded to some instinct within her 'to put on, this afternoon, her bettermost cap for fear of callers.' She was, however, now quite one of Gertrude's friends and admirers, and was always glad when she came to Garnlee.

'How the boys will be enjoying themselves!' said Gertrude, sitting down and helping herself as usual to a stocking; 'and how nice for Bruce to have them when Lady Morell and Jack are away.'

'So Mr. Bruce says,' answered Kate, plunging into a frightful chasm in a grey sock. 'He's so pleased at Dick and Frankie having passed these exams., and it *is* rather lonely for him.'

'I was *so* delighted to hear they had passed,' said Gertrude heartily. 'They do Bruce credit. We must keep Dermid Stewart's school steadily in view for Dick.'

'Mr. Bruce was saying he has a capital plan about it,' said Kate, pricking her finger in her eagerness over the sock.

'He is so clever at thinking out things!' said Gertrude, 'and s—o modest.'

'That he is!' struck in Carruthers; 'you would never suppose he was one of the great gentry in the place. He'll take his seat beside Miss Murrie an' the stockings an' me, and read to us all as if we was the Royal Family theirselves.'

'Well done, Bruce,' thought Gerty.

'An' although the boys is at the Fort, he's over here every day about one thing or t' other—feathers for the twins' hats, or skates for the boys, or apples, or somethin'.'

'Only poor Kate left out in the attentions!' said Gerty archly, while Kate blushed furiously; 'well, never you mind,' to her friend, 'he'll'—

'Oh! Miss Gerty, but she's so cold and distant to him, she'll hardly bide in the room when he comes in here after the lessons. I just wish you would speak to her;' and gathering up an armful of stockings, she went off, to let the two friends have a 'bit crack thegither.'

'What of your father?' asked Gerty, laying down her work, and looking eagerly at Kate.

'The doctor writes that he is one of the most hopeful patients he has ever had, and that he believes the—th—e habit is due mainly to want of occupation. He says it is more difficult to keep him employed in the winter weather than when he gets out about the farm in summer, but that there is a good deal to do, and that now he is giving him the accounts to look after, and finds him so clever. Our hope is, that if he goes steadily on, he may do some farming for himself; and if he could get a small bit of a place near the doctor, we would all go there.'

'Kate?'

'And Dick would like farming; for although he has done so well for Mr. Bruce, he isn't studious, you know. Charlie and Ned are the geniuses of the family,' smiling; 'there's some

credit in store for the family through them, but God will open up the way for us, I am sure.'

'That He will,' reverently.

'I don't feel burdened as I used to do,' Kate went on. 'It's all quite—quite different. I know our Lord cares about our temporal things as well as our spiritual, and I have you a—nd —and'—

'And?'

'Mr. Bruce to thank for it all, Gerty!'

'Dear Kate! I am so glad! And now, whatever your portion in the future may be, you go about a pardoned creature, and with an almighty and loving Friend beside you. I do not know what I should ever have been in my blank desolation and sorrow without my Saviour; and to try and live for Him redeems one's life from its smallness.'

'Entirely. I feel now in this darning, which I particularly dislike, and in the very smallest household act, that, as Christ's servant, it is His work I am doing, and that I can glorify Him in doing it to the very best of my power.'

So they talked on till it was time for Gerty to proceed. 'We hope you will dine with us on Christmas Day, Kate. We have no party, of course, this year, but Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, and Bruce, we expect.'

Kate was charmed to accept. Her poor father was safe from the temptations of the season, and she would be free to enjoy her friend's kind hospitality.

Gerty found Mrs. Stewart in some perplexity.

Dermid had written to ask if he might bring his school-chum to spend the holidays with them, and since their arrival she had heard of the rather serious illness of her father. Whether in a fit of remorse or not, she could not tell, but he had sent to ask her and Mr. Stewart to go and spend the Christmas week with him. She was most unwilling to disoblige her father. The younger children she would take with her; but she felt sorry to leave the boys to a dull house, and without her care.

Gerty sympathized in her difficulty; and knowing that her

father would rather like the variety of the boys, and that she could entertain them without at all inconveniencing him, she at once and most heartily invited her favourite Dermid and his friend to spend the week at the Fort. Mrs. Stewart was delighted. No better nor, for the boys, happier arrangement could be made, and she could not but hope that the plan, so sweetly and disinterestedly made by Gertrude for her accommodation and help, might bring some little brightness into her own stricken heart.

Christmas Day came, a clear, crisp day, bright and sunny; and Gertrude, as she stood at the drawing-room window, waiting for her father to start for Kilbarton, where he had one or two friends to visit, on whom he periodically called at this season, mused over the events of the past year.

'You are very hard-hearted, Dame Nature,' she is soliloquizing, gazing out into the sunshine; 'you smile when one's heart aches! I'd rather not lay my head on your cold breast. I hardly thought I could have felt as much sorrow as I do to-day, and yet there you are, sparkling as if every one was as bright and gay as yourself! How people can worship Nature I know not! Nature's God, her creator and upholder, ah yes!' as she glanced upwards.

The preparations for 'the boys' had been most trying, reminding her, as they so vividly did, of similar loving arrangements for Fred's holiday home-coming. Still she had gone through them all, and had made many plans for their visit being a happy one. When she and her father returned in the afternoon from Kilbarton, she found Dermid and his friend had arrived. How grown and improved the boy was as he came forward, glowing with pleasure at seeing her again, and at the prospect of the happiness in store for them both at the Fort. 'And this is—Egerton,' he said, introducing his school-fellow; 'Anton Egerton—Miss Ellerslie!'

Gerty involuntarily started at the name; and as she shook hands with Anton, looked inquiringly into his face. He met her gaze with an eager expression, more as if half recognising her

than, as most certainly was the case, seeing her for the first time. Anton was tall for a boy of thirteen; 'a thoroughly nice, gentlemanly boy,' was what the most casual observer would say of him; while a phrenologist, in the massive head and large open forehead, would read off his character as one of genius, or at least endowed with great mental powers, together with 'large perseverance.' There was a look of honesty in the clear brown eyes, and a dash of intrepidity in his frank but perfectly well-bred manners. Boys though they were, they were impressed and charmed with Gertrude's beauty and grace; and knowing the sorrow which had come into her home, they felt something like reverence for her quiet, unobtrusive grief.

'Come and let me introduce you to the horses and dogs,' she said, after regaling the boys with tea. 'You won't have much more than time to see about the place before dinner, and we shall arrange the skating for to-morrow when Mr. Morell and the Murries come.'

She took them to the kennels, and to the stables to see the white pony Donald, and her pretty mare; and gathering from Anton that he could ride, promised to have a canter with him some day.

In the evening Bruce, with Dick and Frank, arrived to dinner, and Kate. Gerty, in obedience to her father's wishes, that in the evening she should wear something a little less black than her usual mourning dresses, appeared in a white dress, with white camellias in her hair and dress.

To the boys she was a vision of beauty, while her care and interest about every one, and entire self-forgetfulness, added a charm to her manners. Simmonds, who during these past weeks had 'learned a deal,' was keenly on the alert to do his part well, and Gerty's usual anxiety on such occasions was wearing considerably off.

Everything was quiet and chastened, for ah! one chair was vacant, one loved form was absent; still there was everything that was kind and genial, and all the guests were happy. In the drawing-room, Bruce handed Gertrude some letters which

he had got when calling for his own at the post late in the afternoon, and which, in some fit of absence, he had forgotten till now to deliver. Dermid was invited by Colonel Ellerslie to play chess with him, a game which he had been taught by his father, and for which his enthusiasm was rapidly growing. The other boys chatted about their respective studies and games, and of the chances of continued frost during the holidays. Bruce meanwhile contrived to wile Kate into the recess to look at some photos, and was soon lost to everything around him in the enjoyment of a *tête-à-tête* with Kate, who neither ran out of the room as he took his place beside her, nor had any darning at hand on which to exhaust her energies and affections! Gerty seated herself apart from them to read her letters, secretly rejoicing at the success of her endeavour to give the two a 'good talk with each other.'

One of her letters was from Lady Morell. She was thinking much of her at this special season of the year, she wrote; sorry to be away from her, yet sure she would appreciate her wish to see her grandson, and to be with Adelaide and Sam in their happiness at this Christmas time. 'Adelaide,' she went on, 'has a pet otter, in which she is quite as much if not rather more interested than in her baby. She is as queer a mother as ever you saw, talks as much about it as about the baby, and I sometimes don't clearly know whether it is the otter or the son she is chattering about. Belcom is a fine place, but it wants a deal of looking after, and Adelaide doesn't trouble herself with household matters, and they're not rich enough to keep a housekeeper. As Sir John used to say, "Home is the true sphere of woman," but oh dear me! it's the stables that are Adelaide's sphere! Only fancy, the baby's not two months old yet, and the other day, its nurse being ill, Ada took it out in her arms, for a wonder, into the grounds. There was an otter-hunt up, and she wanted to go, but wasn't allowed. Well. the stream they were dodging for it runs through Belcom, and suddenly a number of the people came tearing along. Ada got quite excited, tied the baby in among the branches of

a tree, and off she went after the hunt! She didn't come back for ever so long, and the baby was in a sort of fit, and quite black in the face with roaring. "Bless me," she said when she saw a queer bundle in the tree, "what's that? Oh! I declare, if it isn't the baby! I'd forgotten all about it!" I never saw Sam so angry; he just stormed, and said he hoped for the future she would remember that the baby was his as well as hers, and take some decenter care of it! It's such a different sort of life from mine and Sir John's! I used to tell him everything about the housekeeping, and servants, and things; but Ada never troubles. It is such a disappointment, too, Hilda not being here; but I'm just very thankful she wasn't killed! It was a bicycle that frightened her horse, you know, and she broke her collar-bone, and was dragged ever so far along the road. Fitz had forbidden her to go to the Meet (he couldn't get leave for it), but she just went, and Mr. Wilmot, the man (he's in the Hussars) she went with, has had a stroke of apoplexy. He *was* fat, still I think it must have been hastened on by his fright about Hilda. This is the second time her collar-bone has been cracked, and the doctor says the next time will be serious, and that she shouldn't mount for some time yet. But she says as soon as it is mended she will be in the saddle again, because, if you give way to nerves, you lose your pluck. I have written to her over and over again, and told her how careful her father always was of me, and how, if I had done anything against his will, he would just have sold my beast, as he once did when I rode a mare that wasn't quite broke, and he was away from home, and I really couldn't wait; somehow he heard of it, though I told everybody to keep it quiet, and my lovely mare was sent away and sold. But he gave me another, I cried so about it, that was quiet. But you may just as well speak to a door nail as to either of the girls; they pay no attention, and go and do the very opposite of what you tell them. Oh dear! I wish I were home again! Jack is very, very cross, and makes me feel so uncomfortable. Ever since you said "No" to him, Gerty, he has been almost unbearable.

How he could expect anything else I know not, for you have snubbed him right and left, and he has only himself to blame. But we old folks, your father and I, sorely wanted it; still, as I said to Sir John when he proposed,—I liked him better than any of my other admirers, who were far richer than Sir John was then, and he was just plain "Mr." too,—I said, "It's we that have really to do with it, not our parents, for we are to live all our lives together, and they will only just come to visit us." So, Gerty, much as I wanted it, and to have you at the Hall, I don't blame you, and Jack is certainly cross-grained. Give my kind Christmas wishes to Kate. How that girl has twined herself round my heart! I liked her from the very first; and Sir John used always to say that I had the finest conception of character he ever came across.'

'Ah, a P.S., of course, dear Lady Morell,' said Gertrude to herself, smiling, as she turned to 'a crossed page' and read—

'So Rose Heywood is married at last! Ada heard it from some Paris friends. It has never been seen in the *Times*, but it is some old French knight, or *chevalier* I suppose I should say—Sir John always liked you to give people their natural titles—night and day I call it. He is very, very rich, and has settled thousands upon her. It took place in Switzerland, probably at that Etolf place near Zurich that we couldn't make out, you remember, in her letter to me, and was in May. But she would write you all about it herself, of course. Be sure and tell me what her wedding dress was, and if she sent you cake. Not a scrap came my way! such is life.'

Such is life indeed, thought Gerty, as she folded up her letter, and gave way to a train of sad memories, recalling the days of their childhood, when Rose was with them, and Fred was the sunshine of both their lives. What a sorrowful end of hopes that once had looked so fair and true! She resolutely lifted her thoughts from Rose; they were too suggestive of the bitterest feelings to be indulged. Her lot in the world's eye looked brilliant, but *her* sin, like the sin of all, would find her out; the bitter dregs of retribution lay hidden in the cup

she was even now drinking, and sooner or later she would have to swallow them.

Amid such sorrowful reflections, called up by Lady Morell's epistle, there were in it elements of comfort too for Gertrude. She felt thankful that, notwithstanding her 'say' to Jack, Lady Morell was still her true and loving friend. And Kate will be a good and tender daughter to her, 'if only she has the sense not to refuse Bruce,' she mentally murmured to herself.

Her next letter was from 'Cousin Helen.' She put it aside after assuring herself that she was well, to read by herself, so as to get the good of it!

Miss Maitland had spent the past summer in the Pyrenees instead of coming home, to Gertrude's great disappointment. She was now, however, so much stronger and better, that she confidently looked forward to returning in the coming summer to St. Helen's, where she hoped to be able for the future permanently to reside. Enclosed in her envelope was a letter from Clotilde! In her repentance and remorse for the cruel injury she had done poor Clotilde, Gertrude had written to her, in self-condemning terms, asking her forgiveness, without any attempt at extenuation, and no answer had come. Gerty now feared there never would. How great, then, was her joy and thankfulness to get the assurance of Clotilde's entire forgiveness, together with the wonderful announcement that while in the Pyrenees they had met Mr. Freer, who was travelling with a brother from India! They renewed their acquaintance, and Clotilde had now the happiness of informing Gerty that they were engaged, and that they were only waiting for some better appointment for him to be married. Could Gerty among any of her London friends speak a few words for him? There would be a vacant situation in a bank at Constantinople soon, if only he could get it! They both longed to live abroad, and the pay was so much better.

As Gerty laid down the letter, a look of intense satisfaction irradiated her face. What an answer! Oh! so infinitely more than an answer was this to her prayers for Clotilde!

How she rejoiced in her regained happiness, so nearly blasted by her cruelty, and how delicately generous she felt it to be in Clotilde to ask her aid in furthering their plans and hopes! We shall be pardoned if we anticipate a little, and inform our readers that Gerty, before she slept, wrote to her Aunt Dorothy, telling her of the coveted post, and urging her to use her interest with her many influential friends to procure it for Mr. Freer.

Aunt Dorothy, who delighted in her real or supposed influence with great people, took the matter warmly up, and Mr. Freer, who was in all respects well fitted to fill the situation, had the gratification of being appointed.

Soon after, he and Clotilde were married, dating the consummation of their happiness from the efforts made by Gertrude on their behalf.

As Gerty laid down her letter, she was startled by finding a pair of brown eyes fixed upon her. Dick and Frank had slipped from the room to 'have some fun with the pups,' and Anton had made a discovery which he was longing to confide to Gertrude, whose kindness made him feel at his ease with her.

'Miss Ellerslie,' he said, coming up to her, 'I knew I had seen you somewhere!'

'Me—Anton?' smiling. 'Am I such a very commonplace-looking mortal, that I am exactly like other people?'

'Miss Ellerslie!' exclaimed Anton reproachfully, with a look of admiration in his eyes, 'I couldn't think to-day where I had seen you, but with that dress on I remembered at once. I saw your photo in Cousin Harry's watch. He had it pasted inside, and one day I saw it, and used often to ask him to show me the beautiful young Scotch lady!'

'Your Cousin Harry, Anton? Who is he? I never saw him, did I?'

'Yes, Captain Egerton, or rather, do you know, he's Major now!' with a look of great glee. 'He has got promotion; but he's not well. I had a letter from him yesterday, and he's been very ill in the West Indies. I believe he'll have to come home!'

'Anton,' in a tone of bewildered surprise, 'is Captain Egerton your—cousin?'

'Yes; Cousin Harry. I've got his photo; would you like to see it, Miss Ellerslie?' said Anton, rising to fetch it. He bounded off, and presently returned with a neat album, in the first page of which was 'Cousin Harry' in uniform.

'How very, very good!' said Gertrude, gazing intently at the fine-cut features of the familiar face, and then glancing at his signature below. 'And who is that?' turning to the opposite page. It was the portrait of a neat, intelligent young woman.

'Oh, that's Gertchen!'

'Who is she?'

'My nurse. She's German, and she lives in London.'

'Was she ever in Paris?' as the scene of the girl in the *café* rose to her mind.

'Oh yes, often; and she went there to see Cousin Harry before he left for the West Indies. She was going to Germany, for her mother was ill, and she went there to see him, because he would be away before she got back.'

'Where is she now?'

'In London, in a large shop-place, where she sews. She likes it better than Paris; but then, you know, the Germans and the French are not great friends! I make every one write their names or a verse of poetry or something under their portrait,' said Anton, smiling; 'they *must* do it.' Gertrude seemed rivetted on this photo as she silently bent over it. 'I told her to write whatever she liked; but then she's German, you know,' as at last Gertrude read aloud the words: 'Yours without failure to-day, and for to-morrow, and for always, 'GERTCHEN.'

It was not the words but the writing which had so powerfully arrested Gerty's gaze. It was identical with that of the note which Rose, in her spite and thirst for revenge, had so carefully enclosed to Lady Morell.

A flush of joy irradiated Gerty's face. Mutual interest about

Anton was doubtless the explanation of the note—of the meeting in the *café*. She needed it not, yet she was glad of it.

'She is so awfully nice, Miss Ellerslie, I'm sure you would like her!'

'Should I?' smiling. 'How pleased she would be at you doing so well with your classes, Anton!' said Gertrude.

'Oh yes!' simply.

'Mrs. Stewart told me your marks were the highest in the school, and that you had come out first in that competitive exam. of boys of your own age in other schools.'

'Did she tell you all that?' said Anton, with sparkling eyes. 'I wonder how she heard! Oh, Dermid, I suppose!' laughing.

Gertrude was greatly drawn towards this delightful boy, and they chatted away about his lessons, and games, and school-fellows, till the evening was gone.

As the chess-players finished their game, Colonel Ellerslie having, of course, severely beaten poor Dermid, who looked very crest-fallen, Bruce and Kate emerged from the recess. There was a light in Kate's eyes, and a flush on her cheek, which at once told Gerty 'her happy secret,' while the look of satisfaction on Bruce's face spoke as plainly to Gertrude, at least as words, that his hopes and desires had been realized by the one magic word which Kate had spoken to him to-night.

'What a very happy Christmas Day we have had!' he said to Gertrude. 'It was so awfully kind to have had us all when'—

'You must come back to-morrow, Bruce!' said Gerty, interrupting him, 'and help Kate and me to entertain the boys. Kate has kindly promised to spend the week with me, and we shall be thankful for your help.'

Bruce readily promised.

'How exactly like you are, Gerty, to that night you and Captain Egerton were at the Hall!' said Bruce, in his usual vague way. 'Your white dress and everything. I—

I remember so well Egerton wheedled my mother out of a photo of you'—

'I have a letter from your mother to-night,' said Gerty, who generally lost patience with Bruce's narrations, but whose cheeks at this moment were burning at the mention of the photo. 'She is coming home soon, I think.'

'So glad. I shall write to her this very night; I have something exceedingly particular to tell her.' Then, as he bade Gerty 'good-night,' he said to her in a low tone, 'Miss Murrie will tell you — has something to tell you, Gerty!'

'She has told me already, Bruce, and so have you!' she answered.

'What?' starting with surprise.

'Yes; eyes speak as well as lips, Bruce, and I am so perfectly happy about it! How heartily I wish you both every good and happiness!'

As she spoke, she shook his hand warmly, more warmly than ever in her life before. Next to the feeling of gladness at his happiness, was one of thankfulness that her decided manner to Jack and himself, especially during the past months, had brought this unlooked-for present reward, viz. that her good and gentle cousin Bruce had wisely turned hopelessly from her, and found in another that response to his affection which it was impossible for her to give; also, that such a happy understanding would still always subsist between herself and Bruce and Lady Morell.

The Christmas week passed quickly, and, to the guests at the Fort, most happily away.

Gertrude, like her mother before her, is recognised as a perfect hostess, taking every trouble to arrange for the comfort and enjoyment of her friends; yet never torturing them, as the manner of some is, by hunting them to weariness through incessant looking after, and to the consequent destruction of all freedom in the spending of their time. Bruce came daily, and, notwithstanding his engagement, helped unspeakably

with the boys, starting them for a ride, or when the frost was keen, accompanying them to a small loch in the neighbourhood, where the ice was good and the skating first-rate. The one spot where, in the case of the boys especially, the shoe pinched a little, was the inexorable punctuality of Colonel Ellerslie's hours; for while they would willingly have gone without food from morning till night, so that they might 'stay out skating while the frost lasted,' his frown and sarcastically sharp words of reproof to each defaulter were sufficiently disagreeable to deter them from repeating the offence. Gertrude and Anton meanwhile saw a great deal of each other. They rode together frequently; and in the evenings, when Colonel Ellerslie tackled Dermid, or sometimes Dick, to a game at chess, and Bruce produced the album in the recess, while the other boys played games, or stole out of the rooms to 'get the dogs,' Anton fell to Gertrude's share to entertain, and judging by their animated looks, the pleasure seemed a mutual one. Anton's chief theme of talk with Gertrude was 'Cousin Harry;' and she was no uninterested listener to the many stories he had to tell of his brave feats, as related by his fellow-officers; his holiday-making with himself; their reading, their rides, and above all, the prospect of his home-coming, and the renewal of all that happy intercourse. Like a golden thread, this hope ran through the fabric of his daily life, and cheered him on in all his work and study; and when Gertrude, in their talk, spoke of 'still higher motives,' she was met, on the part of Anton, by a frank yet modest response to all her remarks. In few and boyish, but most genuine words, he testified to his sympathy and understanding of the noble principles which he soon learned to know were the springs of her own daily life.

Anton wrote 'Cousin Harry' a long letter from the Fort. It was full of the rides and skating and enjoyment they were having, and of the beauty and kindness of Miss Ellerslie. He told of Fred's death as Gertrude had described it to him, and

of her loneliness for the want of him; also of Colonel Ellerslie's 'rows about the dishes,' and the 'awful wiggings' he gave them for their occasional 'lateness.' Then he went on to say that he had not seen any of his cousin's friends the Morells, except Mr. Bruce, who was the only one at home; that he was at the Fort every day, and always sat beside Miss Murrie, who was staying there; that he wondered if Miss Murrie understood what he said when he was showing her the album with the photographs, but that as they looked at them every evening, and generally all the evening, he thought she must know them by heart for herself without Mr. Bruce's explanations!

His cousin's particular friend, Mr. Jack Morell, he mentioned, was in England somewhere, and a letter had come saying he was going off to Australia, as he was tired of living in Lonshire.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'Submit yourself to God, and you shall find
God fights the battles of a will resigned.'

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Stewart returned home, Dermid and Anton left the Fort. It was quite natural and proper, Gerty felt, but she missed them terribly, and so, she could see, did her father.

Lady Morell also came home, having hurried her visit, not at all reluctantly, it must be confessed, on hearing from Bruce of his engagement, and in her eagerness to welcome Kate to her motherly heart, and to have talks 'about it' with Gerty specially, and with every one else besides who would venture on the subject with her.

Some of the other families went to London this winter, the Yorke Ewings to Brussels, while the Murries were in all the excitement of Kate's wedding, and their own migration, as a family, to England. The long-suffering friends of Major Murrie's late wife resolved to make one more effort for his help, and generously supplied the means for taking a small farm on lease, where, with the good doctor's counsel and assistance at hand, it is hoped he may avail himself of this new opportunity for retrieving his character, and supporting his family and himself.

Carruthers has had 'a call' to go to some aunts in the far North, who are too helpless to look after themselves, and who have promised her everything when they are done with it. It is doubtful if the devoted creature would have left the family of her dear mistress for any relation of her own; but a

widowed sister of the Major, who has long wished to keep house for her brother, has volunteered to take Kate's place, and with her Carruthers feels it would be impossible to continue in her post.

In these circumstances, Kate, who at first had only engaged herself to Bruce with a very far off prospect of their marriage taking place, has yielded to his persuasions to have it at once, and is grateful for the prospect of happiness for her young charge under the firm but gentle guardianship of their aunt.

Lady Morell, who is overjoyed at the prospect of at last having something like a real daughter, has begged Bruce and Kate to make the Hall—in the meantime at least—their home. Some one must look after the farms, and 'as Jack has gone off in the sulks to the backwoods, Bruce must try his hand.' Fortunately there is a good land-steward, and Bruce will set himself heartily and happily to his work and duty as a farmer. As the Hall property is Lady Morell's in her own right, and is freely at her own disposal, none of her family can object to this arrangement. Jack will probably settle in Australia. His patrimony will enable him to purchase land should he choose, or to make a lengthy tour in the new country should he prefer a roving life. If at any time he is prompted to return once more to his home in the old country, there will be kind hearts there to welcome him among them.

All these changes, in addition to their own special sorrow, made Lonshire this winter unusually dull for Colonel Ellerslie and Gertrude. The quietness fitted in with Gertrude's feelings; but to Colonel Ellerslie, accustomed as he was to the constant intercourse with the Morells, and the social exchange of hospitalities with the Yorke Ewings and the other neighbouring families, the monotony became almost unbearable. He missed the Honourable Jack beyond description. One in politics and in many of their tastes, scarcely a day had passed without their meeting, added to which, as the reader is aware, there had been another powerful and absorbing, if from the first hopeless, attraction to the Fort.

On the accomplishment of his wishes that Gertrude should marry Jack, and settle down at the Hall near him, and in a position well pleasing to him, Colonel Ellerslie had set his heart. But Gertrude, obedient in all points, when it became her to be so, to her father, declined absolutely *to marry to please him.* It is certain, with her Christian views of duty, that she never would have married against his will, however out of all reason that will might be. But her convictions on the other side were no less strong, and she felt that, as a parent, he was stepping beyond his prerogative in bidding her marry a man for whom she had neither esteem nor love, and she very decidedly but respectfully told him so.

'It was altogether horribly dull,' the Colonel mentally kept muttering; the winter was severe, the roads were blocked with snow, and communication with the outer world was limited. Gertrude was full of occupation. She painted; she was still helping Mrs. Stewart with her scheme, and got heaps of purchasers for their pretty work; she practised, and read, and went among her scholars, and the poor old people, finishing up every evening with chess, a game for which having no taste, she was glad when Bruce dropped in and took her place now and then.

One of the Colonel's little pastimes, during this dreary season, was a lawsuit which he was carrying on in Edinburgh against a cousin who had very inconveniently come forward, and was disputing his succession to a large sum of money to which he had succeeded years before. This cousin, Gerard Ellerslie, had been in New Zealand the greater part of his life, and on his return to his own country a year ago had got into the hands of an unscrupulous lawyer, who had urged him to contest the Colonel's hitherto unchallenged right to the fortune which had been left to him. Should Gerard succeed in his endeavour to set aside their uncle's will, Colonel Ellerslie would lose the great bulk of his wealth. The worry and annoyance were great, and the case was to be tried,

during this winter-session, early in January. One morning the Colonel received a letter on the subject which greatly troubled him. After spending a couple of hours in the library, he went for Gertrude, and told her the serious aspect of the case as set before him in his agents' letter. She knew well about the case, for she copied all her father's letters, and often wished the lawyers at John o' Groat's House!

'There are some points here,' added the Colonel, referring to the letter, 'on which I'm not very clear, but Dorothea knows all about the whole thing. I must go and see her.'

'Go! Papa, couldn't you write to her? In such weather too!' exclaimed Gertrude. 'Let me come, and we'll write and ask her everything!'

'It wouldn't do, women are so diffuse. I should have to wade through pages before I got the glimmer of an answer to a plain question. No; I must go, and I'll get her to write, under my eye, all she knows.'

'Let me come with you, then,' said Gerty, seriously alarmed at the ill-concealed agitation on her father's face. But he would not hear of it, and announced his intention of catching the train that afternoon from Kilbarton which would take him to the neighbouring town in time for the London night express. It was an unheard-of expedition in the annals of Gerty's life; but all further endeavours to persuade him to let her go with him being useless, she set about making the necessary preparations for his journey. She endeavoured to take the brightest side of matters, and to make her father do the same, reminding him, too, of Aunt Dorothy's sharpness in business matters, and wonderful memory for family details and dates.

His first letter announced his safe arrival, and the result of a long conversation with Dorothea, whose indignation at the whole thing found vent in long invectives against Gerard; and the Colonel found it simply impossible to chain down her mind to the pressing subject on hand.

His second letter was much more hopeful. Dorothea had

cleared up various difficulties, and had reminded him of a certain letter which their uncle had written to her the same year in which his will had been made, leaving the bulk of his fortune to the Colonel, and in which he displayed the most perfect possession of all his faculties. 'This letter,' Colonel Ellerslie wrote to Gerty, 'Dorothea avers she gave to me. It would supply the missing link to the chain of evidence for my defence, therefore search for it everywhere; in the nest of drawers, in my writing-table, and if not found there, look carefully in my ebony desk. It will be an old yellowish letter, not a business letter, you understand. Read it; you will soon see if it is the one wanted, and send it on at once.'

As may be supposed, Gerty, on receipt of this urgent epistle, set to work at once, and dived into all the drawers and pigeonholes as directed. No trace of it was seen; and the number of envelopes she opened, the contents of which were family letters to her father and her aunt, was legion. At last she turned to the ebony desk. She knew her father kept her mother's letters there, and she felt a sacred awe come over her as she unlocked it. Reverently she took up the letters in her mother's handwriting, and without opening one of them, laid them aside. Next came letters addressed to 'Miss Ellerslie;' these she opened, and read as desired, but none of them was the missing one. At last, just as she thought she had completed her vain search, her eye fell on one deep down below all the others. It had a yellow, almost shrivelled appearance, and as she took it up, and read on the envelope, 'Miss Ellerslie,' a thrill of hope shot through her heart that now she had found it. The envelope was scorched, she almost fancied the smell of fire was about it, and with trembling hand she took the letter from the envelope. To her joy, it was almost entire, only the first lines were somewhat illegible; but there it was, addressed 'Miss Ellerslie,' so it was all right. 'All right!' Gertrude felt 'all queer' as she read on; for the words were words of love, deep, tender, ardent love—just such as, from a true lover to herself, would have thrilled and won her heart.

From some admirer of Aunt Dorothy's,' she soliloquized, 'and she wouldn't like *me* to be reading it; but how odd that it ever came into Papa's hands!' She resolved to read no more, and folded up the letter; but just as she was replacing it in the envelope, her eye fell on the signature, 'Harry Egerton,' and the words, 'We shall meet at St. Helen's to-night; then I shall know if I am to be blessed with your love, with yourself, my Gertrude, and made happy for life!'

What a revelation! Gerty felt her brain almost reel under the sudden surprise. She pulled out the letter again and devoured it with her hungry eyes. It was *hers*. These words of love were for *her*, and she had never known them —never seen them—till this moment! Months had passed since they should have been hers, and now! he had doubtless taken the strange silence on her part, as he was entitled to do, as an affront, and had put her out of his thoughts, out of his heart. And she was powerless, she could not move a finger in the matter; and had she been able, it was all too late; he was married, or at least engaged to another. A terrible tumult of feeling swept over poor Gertrude's heart. 'What might have been!' was the burden of her painful thoughts. Had she only had fair play, been treated by her father as she was entitled to be, how different would her lot have been to-day from the solitary, stricken creature she was!

'And yet, and yet,' she thought on, when calm enough to glance at the other side of the matter, 'there *must* have been a reason for all this—a needs-be. I know that if my earthly parent, for some reason of his own, has acted thus, it has been permitted at least by my *Heavenly Father*, whose hand shapes all events, shapes mine,—who *can* bring good out of the greatest seeming evil, and means perhaps to teach me patience a—nd trust. I can see a little about it; ah! and then I might not have been beside Fred, a—nd I would rather have missed anything and have been with him!' Then, scarcely able to disentangle the tangled web of her circumstances, she gave up puzzling herself, and told all

her sorrow into her Saviour's ear, rolling her heavy burden on Him. The relief was unspeakable. She rose with the sense of having put herself and her case into the hands of Him who had 'given her the shield of His salvation,' 'whose right hand had holden her up,' and 'whose gentleness would yet make her great!' If the oppressed heart would pray first, and then act, instead of dashing on to its own deeds, and then, discomfited and defeated, coming to a throne of grace, how many mistakes would be saved, and how much clear direction as well as strength would be imparted!

Gertrude felt calmed, and her line of action was made plain. She wrote at once to her father, telling him of her fruitless search for the letter he wanted, and of the startling discovery of Egerton's in the ebony desk. She asked for an explanation of the whole matter, adding that she felt she was entitled to know from him the fact of a matter so materially affecting her happiness. Half an hour after her letter was gone Simmonds handed her a telegram. 'Anither telegraph, Miss Gerty,' he said solemnly; 'they're fashious things, an' the whipper-snappers o' laddies that brings them is as canty as laverocks. They come whistlin' to the door wi' maybe a warrant o' death in their yellow envellops, an' haunds them in as if it was a leg o' mutton. Most unfeelin' wretches they a' are.'

The telegram was from Colonel Ellerslie, and was as follows: 'Missing letter found. Do not, on any account, open the ebony desk.'

'He has remembered *my* letter,' thought Gerty, 'but he has remembered it too late!'

Gertrude could not hear from her father for two days, and then only if he wrote by return, which, in the circumstances, she hardly thought he would. They were days of suspense, yet, as was now her way, she did not allow her personal sorrow to interrupt her routine of duty. There was no earthly friend near, to whom she chose to tell her peculiar trial; and it was wonderful, when she had consulted with her heavenly Friend

and Counsellor, how little there was left to fret about, or to go troubling others with! Her studious habits served her, as we have said before, in good stead, and her generous, self-denying interest in others gave full occupation for her energetic nature; and, as she said, she just lived from day to day, not troubling herself to-day with to-morrow's cares, many of which, when to-morrow came, had rolled away.

At present she was engrossed with Kate's happiness and affairs; indeed, as Kate remarked to Bruce, 'Gerty is as interested about our marriage as if it were her own.' She was most anxious that Kate should have her little *trousseau* 'good and handsome,' and many were the contrivances on the part of both of them to accomplish this on the rather slender means at their command. Kate had various small presents of money sent her from old friends of her mother, who delicately asked her to accept their wedding-presents in this commonplace form, as she knew better what to get than old-fashioned folks like themselves. Gerty, whose yearly allowance from her father was handsome, and who was free to spend it as she liked, provided she always dressed as his daughter should, diverted a good share of it into the channel of Kate's *trousseau*, and Miss Ellerslie's taste and style were so unexceptionable that the Kilbarton dressmaker, Miss Ruffles, whom Kate employed for her wedding and starting-dresses, was glad to take any hints and suggestions from her.

Arnot's sewing-machine was carried down to Garnlee and took the place on the schoolroom table of the usual groaning basket of stockings. It was wonderful the amount of work that was gone through, while the ingenuity and skill brought out on the part of every one were curious and interesting. The twins, who, with Flo, were to be bridesmaids, had enough to do with their own preparations, and the time passed merrily and quickly away. Bruce 'held on at his klesses in a wonderful manner,' Carruthers thought, 'for a gentleman who was not only engaged, but had such a position in the county.' He was,

however, rewarded at the end of each day's faithful work by a *tête-à-tête* with Kate, who conducted herself now to Carruthers' entire satisfaction, and whose look of restful happiness was refreshing to see.

Gerty meanwhile had no answer from her father to her letter. Aunt Dorothy wrote giving minute particulars of the discovery of 'the lost letter,' and of the more hopeful view which the Scotch lawyers were now taking of the case. Gertrude could not understand what detained her father in London, seeing his interview with Aunt Dorothy had ended so satisfactorily, and knowing his dislike to being from home. But at last, at the end of a week or two, the mystery was solved by a very anxious and half-alarming epistle from Aunt Dorothy, to say that a cold, which the Colonel had caught, and to throw off which he had been resorting to every imaginable cure, had turned into a feverish attack, and he was now in the doctor's hands. 'Dr. Blenkinsop,' Aunt Dorothy wrote, 'says he must be exceedingly careful, and may not, at this season, be able to travel home for weeks; so Gerty, you must come off at once to us; your father is nervously anxious to have you here. Be as quick in arranging everything as you can, and come.' A great many suggestions about 'leaving the house' followed, with messages *ad libitum* from her father, about the horses, and the cows, the wine-cellar, and the hot-houses, the letter winding up with, 'Bring Arnot with you, and all your dinner-dresses, and your very prettiest things!'

Gerty, as may be supposed, was filled with anxiety about her father, who had scarcely, within her knowledge, had a day's sickness, and pushed forward all her preparations, wondering what Aunt Dorothy could mean by her closing order, and feeling a little ashamed of the very limited supply of dresses of any kind which, at the present moment, she had to produce. Her partings with Lady Morell and 'the young couple,' as well as with her dear friends at the Manse, were 'for a week or two,' and she had many kind offices to do for them all in the buying and selling line in the great metropolis,—lockets to get for

the twins and Flo, as Bruce's gifts; a few bargains for Carruthers at Whitely's; and the disposal of a 'beautiful lot' of fans and boxes for Mrs. Stewart among Aunt Dorothy's rich and fashionable friends.

On her arrival in Brook Street, she was startled to find her father so ill. He was closely confined to his room, and his cough was severe. He brightened at sight of her, and her loving care and unremitting attention greatly soothed and comforted him. The doctor declared she had some secret charm about her which worked like magic on his patient. Certain it is, that the unfavourable feverish symptoms began to disappear; and Colonel Ellerslie, to whom Cannes or Mentone had seemed inevitable, was inexpressibly relieved by being told that if he would consent to live in two rooms of equal temperature, he might stay at home. To one who hated, as he did, everything Continental, the permission was a reprieve from banishment, and he resigned himself contentedly to undergo his sentence. Aunt Dorothy did everything for his comfort, routing up her easy-going but capable Scotch cook to the admixture of sauces and the compounding of soups, of which, even with her long experience, she had 'never before heard tell.' Gradually he resumed his writing, reading, and chess. Dermid and Anton spent many a half-holiday at Brook Street, and by their cheerful spirits and tales of school-life greatly enlivened the little party in their enforced seclusion in the invalid's room. Surely but slowly he recovered; and the successful issue of the case in the Edinburgh Court of Session, where Gerard's claim was shivered, and the Colonel's right to his uncle's fortune was established, had its own share in the restoration of his health and spirits.

Meanwhile the weeks had crept on; the winter was past, and spring, in her sweet, fresh beauty, reigned triumphant. Aunt Dorothy began to take Gerty about, and introduce her to her friends, feeling not a little pleased at the admiration she everywhere excited. Her afternoon teas, the only entertainments in which, during her brother's convalescence, Miss Ellerslie

indulged, were unusually popular, and there soon came to be no manner of doubt as to what formed, in the case of some of her most distinguished guests, their chief object of attraction.

All this time Colonel Ellerslie had not once approached the subject so full of interest to Gertrude—her letter; while in her anxiety to keep off all exciting subjects, she had never during their daily *tête-à-têtes* in his sick-room adverted to it. His nervousness at seeing her after her discovery of his concealment wore off, while her devotion and care for him touched his heart. Her silence on the subject surprised him, expecting, as he had done, an outburst of reproach. He tried to school himself into the hope that the thing had blown past, and that she had ceased to think about it. But a certain wistfulness in her eyes at times, as, in their transparent blueness, they met his, disturbed him; while a perceptible languor, from which she always tried to rouse herself, often sent an anxious pang to his heart.

'Now that the fine weather has come, Dorothea,' he said to his sister, 'we must get Gerty some amusement; she is looking a little pale and weary.'

'So she is, Archibald, but remember the—th—e—strain and watching she has had, and never a murmur nor an angry word. She *is* changed! I can hardly believe she is the same girl; plenty of spirit, plenty! but so thoughtful and self-denying! She is always thinking what to do for you, and how to save me trouble.' Something like a tear glistened in Aunt Dorothy's hard, keen eye as she added, 'I only hope she is well, and nothing vexing her; for although she is so bright and kind with us, I often, when I go unexpectedly into the drawing-room, find her sad and listless-looking.'

'She has just been too closely shut up here,' said the Colonel, thoroughly roused to anxiety by his sister's words; 'you will take her about, Dorothea, and amuse her.'

'That I will; but when I told her you proposed us going to the opera and the theatre, she shook her head, and said, in her firm way, "I would rather not, Aunt Dorothy;" and when

she says a thing like that, you know that she means it, and that it's no use arguing. She's curious in her likings too. She is perfectly indifferent to the marked attentions of Major Willoughby, whom we meet at afternoon teas, but she'll talk with the deepest interest to the Vicar or Mr. Brooks about their work in St. Giles's or Billingsgate. She actually asked me to let her go with Mr. Brooks and his sister to see some of these frightful places. I'm just terrified about her, Archibald. She's getting too good to live. Major Willoughby said to me the other day, "Your niece is heavenly, Miss Ellerslie; she only wants wings to be an angel." Of course it was his flowery way of speaking, but his words have haunted me ever since.'

'Who is Major Willoughby?' asked the Colonel.

'Oh, he is of good family, well off, and not bad-looking. He speaks of himself as rich, and I know, at any rate, he has great expectations.'

Just then Gertrude came to say, as Lady Morell always would say, '*au reservoir*' to her father, and to join her aunt. They were going to the Academy; Dermid and Anton were to meet them there.

Her father gazed at her, as, in her pretty spring costume of soft creamy cashmere, with bunches of pansies in her tiny bonnet and about her dress, she stood before him in her unconscious beauty; and as they left him to his books, with the usual and strictly fulfilled promise that they would not be long away, he muttered to himself, 'What sheer cruelty to *her* it would have been to have let her go to the backwoods of America or to some burning Indian plains.'

As the carriage stopped at Burlington House, Dermid and Anton met them, and, as usual, Gertrude and Anton paired off, and went to enjoy some favourite pictures together, while Aunt Dorothy met friends and cronies to whom she was always wanting to introduce Gertrude, who was often, however, not to be found on such occasions. Gertrude's spirits rose,—they always did when with Anton,—while their

love of painting made their pleasure in a visit to the galleries mutual. They were just turning from a long and critical inspection of one of Mrs. Butler's pictures, when the Major and Mr. Wicks of the —— Hussars 'hove in sight,' as Anton expressed it. For that matter, they were always now turning up whenever Gertrude appeared; and considering that they were in London, where friends may live and die next door to each other without knowing they are neighbours, it was strange.

'Anton,' said Gertrude, as she noticed them, 'we must find Aunt Dorothy; but if we can't, *please* don't leave me.'

The two gentlemen made for Gertrude. She greeted them civilly but coldly; but they were not to be shaken off. Mr. Wicks tried to lead Anton off, but this 'chit of a boy' was not to be complimented out of his place by Gertrude's side. He saw she did not like these people, and he was annoyed himself at their interfering with his pleasant time with Gertrude.

'What are these, or who, rather?' said Gertrude, as at last they sat down to watch for Aunt Dorothy, who had promised to come this way.

'Ah, these are æsthetes!' said the Major.

'What are they doing?' fixing her gaze on two ladies on a bench near. They wore brick-red dresses, flowing *à la Grecque*, with large tennis sort of hats, and each held in her hand a small bouquet of white lilies, on which, and on which alone, her eyes seemed to rest.

'They are absorbed in meditation,' said her companion; 'their minds, you observe, are withdrawn from sublunary things.'

'Idiots!' exclaimed Anton, on her other side.

'But why not stay at home and look at their flowers?' asked Gerty; 'why oppress others with such a spectacle?'

'Of course they hope to attract others to join their fraternity, and quit the frivolities of life for the contemplation of the sublime,' said Major Willoughby.

'Surely we were not sent into the world to hold flowers in

our hands all day!' said Gerty. 'I can't make them out; and they certainly have a most absurd appearance.'

'If they would raise their eyes and turn them in this direction,' said the Major, gazing admiringly at Gerty, 'they would find something to feed both heart and mind.'

Gertrude blushed, and rising, said, 'I really must find my aunt. It is time for us to go.'

'Miss Ellerslie, why do you treat me so coldly? Let me speak, listen to me,' said the Major earnestly. 'I never can get you alone to tell you of my—my'—

'Ah, there is Aunt Dorothy!' exclaimed Gerty, bounding towards her in her eagerness to get quit of the Major. 'Here we are, auntie. Wherever have you been?' and she flew, like a frightened bird, to the shelter of her aunt's wing.

'What a swell!' exclaimed Mr. Wicks as the little group stood talking and a lady and gentleman swept past. The gentleman was elderly and bent, the lady young and beautiful. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion, not æsthetic certainly, but richly and elaborately. Her costume, of the most delicate pink satin trimmed with black lace, and her bonnet of the same shade, showed off to advantage a most dazzling form and face. She had more jewellery about her than was consistent with good taste; still it suited her, and was effective. Every one looked at her, as proudly, almost scornfully, she moved along the rooms. Yet her dark eyes had a restless look about them, and the pretty lips seemed glued together in sullen silence. As she passed, Gerty glanced at her and started. It was—yes, it certainly was Rose, and this old, infirm man was doubtless her husband, the chevalier of whom Lady Morell had written.

'Not many words passing between *them*,' remarked Mr. Wicks, as, with her head in the air, Lady Ellerslie marched grandly on.

'Equal to the æsthetes, only they're walking,' said the Major, who made an effort to say something to recover himself from Gerty's snubbing.

Gerty followed them with her eyes long after the others had ceased looking after them. Rose had not observed her, for which she was thankful, yet a sort of fascination held her gaze chained upon them, so entwined, as they were, with the story of *his* life now gone. Instead of leaving the galleries, Aunt Dorothy, who longed to give the Major a further opportunity of being with Gertrude, expressed a wish to see a picture at the far end of the room, and thither they bent their steps. Gerty's heart beat violently as they approached nearer to where Rose and her husband and a third figure, who had joined them, stood, opposite one of Millais' charming pictures.

A magic change had come over Rose. Her face was wreathed in smiles, and her brilliant eyes were casting looks upon this man, which seemed denied to the only one whose right it was to have them. Her husband seemed tired and annoyed, and was urging her to leave; but with a defiant flash she refused, and while he made for a seat suddenly vacated, she moved on with her companion. He was a handsome, but dissipated-looking man, with a most forbidding expression of face.

He talked in a low tone to Rose, and her colour came and went as she listened. Slowly at last they retraced their steps to where the old man sat. He joined them, and they all walked towards the door. Aunt Dorothy, all unconscious, followed, with her party, close upon them. Her carriage was not ordered back, as they preferred walking home. At the door Rose and her husband had an altercation. Their carriage was late; the old gentleman wished to wait for it, but was over-persuaded to walk on and meet it. Presently they came to a crowded thoroughfare, carriages, hansoms, 'buses, riders, and pedestrians forming such a bewildering phalanx between the two sides of the street, which all had to cross, that Gerty turned away her head, fearing a recognition on Rose's part was inevitable. Not so, however. Giving her hand to her companion, Rose and he quietly threaded their

way across, while her husband was left to scramble after them as best he might. After carefully reconnoitring his ground, he started, but had only taken a step or two when a private hansom, drawn by a high-mettled horse, dashed down upon him. Bewildered, he lost all power of motion, while screams and groans made 'dire confusion more confused.' Just, however, as the crowd, horror-stricken, believed his fate was inevitable, some one flew to the horse's head, and at the risk of his own life pulled it up sharp, while the poor gentleman was dragged back and saved! It was the work of a moment, but a moment charged with life or death; and it was the heroic deed, not of brave men who thronged the streets, but of that 'chit of a boy,' who took his place, when all was done, by Gertrude's side, quite unconscious of having done anything remarkable, yet amply rewarded by the warm words she spoke, and by the confiding way in which, declining all help from the Major or Mr. Wicks, she put her hand within his arm, and was safely piloted across.

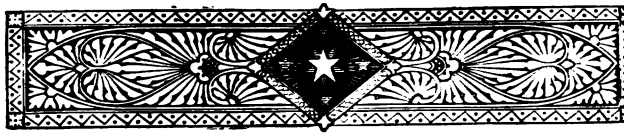
As Anton, for it was he, stepped on the pavement, a spontaneous cheer rang through the air, and a crowd gathered to catch a sight of the 'brave young gentleman.' Lifting his hat, and bowing gracefully in acknowledgment, he then turned eagerly to Gerty and Aunt Dorothy, and begged them to drive home and 'get out of this.' He had once seen 'Cousin Harry' do the same thing, and save a man's life; 'what was the use of making such a row about nothing?' But he was not to escape just yet, for 'the gentleman he had saved,' having sufficiently recovered from the shock, came forward, and in very grateful terms expressed his deep sense of obligation to his intrepid young deliverer. To whom did he owe his escape? He must see and know more of him.

Anton, again raising his hat, said smilingly, 'It was nothing at all;' and 'he didn't want any thanks, he was so glad to have done it.'

'Here is my card, then,' handing it to Anton as—yielding to the persuasions of the foreigner friend to come away, for his

wife, who had been in hysterics, was waiting anxiously for him in a shop close by—he moved off; 'be sure and come to see me. Promise me'—

'Certainly,' said Anton, bowing respectfully to the courtier-looking gentleman; at last he and Dermid, along with Gerty and Aunt Dorothy, succeeded in driving quietly away from the exciting scene.



CHAPTER XXXII.

'Doomed to that sorest task of man alive,
To make three guineas do the work of five.'

WE left Mrs. Heywood and Rose, more than a year ago, in the *pension* at the little village—Etolf—in one of the Swiss valleys near Zurich. The air, when we parted with them, within and without was cold, and the spirits of both were at zero. After the excitement of Paris, the life in the cheap out-of-the-world *pension* was cruel in the extreme; one and all of its temporary inhabitants were persons in reduced, extremely reduced, circumstances. Some, like our English friends, were retrenching, with hopes for the future, silver-lining the objectionable dark cloud of poverty which for the present was shrouding them; others were living out the dregs of a busy life in retirement here; while a few had resorted to it for change—cheap change of air and scene—to recruit weak bodies and occasionally weak minds. Madame Duprès, who, with her daughter Henriette, carried on the 'leetle beesness,' was a good soul, if necessarily sharp-witted and far-seeing. All her boarders looked out keenly for themselves; and a widow,—with a daughter to provide for,—she had to exercise her very inventive and contriving brain to make any little profit at all out of the begrudged board she received. She had lived, years ago, in a second-rate *pension* herself in Paris, and knew experimentally all the tricks on both sides; on all debateable points, therefore, she sought refuge in the use and wont of the house in the Rue Frédéric. There were

grades in the society at Château Vert,—as the *pension* was entitled,—as there are in all other societies throughout the world; and as many petty envies and jealousies rankled in the breasts here as in circles where, to the unprejudiced on-looker, there was more to feed upon. Madame la Baronne, who pays even at this dull season her thirty francs a week, has a room on Madame's first floor, with a southern aspect. She is a *vinaigrette* of a creature, with a rasping voice, and a good deal of sham jewellery; but she pays regularly, and is almost a fixture, except for a month or so in the season, which she spends in Paris. The two Demoiselles Bonillon, young ladies who 'have something to do with the stage,' and who are at present believed to be rehearsing, or, at least, getting up their parts for the coming season, occupy a room on the second floor, next to those of Mrs. Heywood and Rose. Mrs. General Tomkins, a poor English lady of a certain age, but who takes every opportunity of explaining the great disparity of years there was between the late General and herself, has an apartment on the third floor. So has Mademoiselle Lafleur, a 'sort of artist,' who is filling in her pictures, and resting till the spring unlocks the hidden beauties of nature to fill her sketch-book with views from the Swiss valleys. Besides, there is a little acute Miss Forth, a Scotch young lady, whose father, having lost all his money by the failure of a bank, has retired here for a year's hard study with the view of succeeding a lady in a school, and doing for herself and her family. She is a hard student, rising early to 'grind,' as Rose expresses it, at German and French and music, and everything else besides, availing herself of Henriette Duprès to give her lessons in German and French, in return for which she instructs her in English. This Lizzie Forth is a living rebuke to Rose, whose indolence, frivolity, and extreme selfishness jar upon every one, but especially upon this eager and self-denying student. Mrs. Heywood had never trained her daughter to any habit of industry, never, indeed, trained her to anything beyond the contemplation of her own beauty, and the value to be set upon

it, not as it should bring to its owner honour, or influence, or even pleasure, but riches, title, position. Rose had heard the fatal word 'beauty' in connection with herself when she was the merest child, and had grown up with the one fixed idea and aim in her young mind to purchase with it the blessings denied her, to escape from the 'shameful poverty and pinching economy' which they were compelled to endure by a brilliant match. She would have treated it as an insult to her peerless charms to have had it suggested to *her* to cultivate her mind instead of adorning her body, and to turn the more than average talents with which she was endowed to the supporting of her mother and herself. She is really uneducated, notwithstanding her mother's protestations to the contrary, but has a vast amount of knowledge picked up in novels, which she devours. Mrs. Heywood's matrimonial hopes for Rose have been dashed again and again, and she is beginning to weary of the 'little game,' and of the petulance and general tiresomeness of her daughter. Her fluctuating hopes are now centred on Sir Everard, and he is ill. He writes, however, that he is recovering; and the energies of her active mind are bent on the accomplishment of a gay *trousseau* for Rose. She wrote to all her friends,—acquaintances rather we should say, for her friends were few,—informing them of the marriage, and dilating on the splendid gifts which were pouring in; delicately hinting, however, that valuable and acceptable as the wedding presents were, she wished their kind friends would spare themselves the trouble of sending them so far, and enclose money instead. By dint of such, and even more flagrantly begging letters, a considerable sum was scraped together, and a rather smart outfit was contrived. Rose meanwhile spent her time between grumbling and embroidering herself a dress, her mother plying the sewing-machine on her behalf morning, noon, and night.

By and by a little excitement for Rose occurred, by the arrival at the *pension* of a certain Monsieur le Nord, who immediately fell in love with *la belle Anglaise*, and paid her the most marked attentions. Rose received his flatteries

with evident pleasure, and on her accepting a ring from him, Mrs. Heywood became seriously alarmed. She informed him of her daughter's engagement, and remonstrated with Rose on her insane behaviour, bringing down upon herself Rose's fury, who complained bitterly that she was prevented having even this mild pleasure before submitting to be bound by the golden chains forging for her. M. le Nord, although he spoke grandly of his high family and great means, seemed for the present somewhat straitened, but he explained that he had come to Switzerland while his late father (the Baron's) affairs were being wound up, and for a little breathing-time before entering on the duties of the estate to which he had succeeded.

Rose, whose life during the past weeks had been a mere existence, having nothing but the rather scrimp admiration of the ladies to feed upon, and their toilettes and frequent bickerings over their places by the fire to divert her, expanded under the sunshine of this man's devotion. All this time she was corresponding with Sir Everard as his *fiancée*, and receiving from him, as such, the most costly presents. He still begged her to keep their engagement secret, and in one of his letters spoke of his wish that their marriage should be very private, on account of his still infirm state of health.

'I feel,' wrote the poor deluded man, 'quite unequal to the excitement of a gay wedding; but I am equally sure that, with my beautiful wife by my side, I shall get strong and well as ever. Could we not have it at the *pension?* After our tour, we would return to Paris, where I shall be the envy of all the world!'

As the reader knows, Sir Everard had his own cogent reasons for wishing to get his marriage quietly over. Proud as he was of his conquest of such a beautiful girl as Rose, he knew enough of worldly women to dread that, if she heard of Anton and his claims upon his father, she might throw him overboard. And this in the face of all Paris knowing of their

engagement, he could not brook. His proposal fitted in with the juncture of affairs at the *pension*. The same post that brought his letter, brought one also from the Chevalier Jacqueline, politely but decidedly declining, in name of himself and his wife, to have the wedding from his hotel. 'Madame is ill,' he wrote, 'and the doctors forbid her exerting herself, else the honour and pleasure of having the interesting event from our *château* would have been great.'

The Chevalier knew by experience the difficulty of getting payment from Mrs. Heywood for any debt incurred; and though it was an honour to be connected with this wealthy English milord, it would be inconvenient to be put so much out of pocket, as, should he consent to her wish, he certainly would be. So the wedding was fixed to take place early in April, and Madame Duprès was in a transport of joy at the idea of *ce grand mariage* occurring in her Château Vert.

Spring had come. Nature had put on her fairest robes; the smiling valleys were decked with early flowers, the vines were being dressed; far away up the mountains the *ranz de vaches* was heard, and the tinkle of the cow-bells sounded musically in the air. A radiant evening had succeeded a day of marvellous warmth and beauty. It was within a week of Rose's marriage-day. Sir Everard was coming. He had engaged the whole of the little hotel in Etolf, and the excitement in the village and at Château Vert was great. Mrs. Heywood, whose injunctions seemed to have been most effectual, inasmuch as Rose and M. le Nord were supposed to have seen of late but little of one another, breathed freely, and congratulated herself on her tact. He had been absent for several days, and they had been days of bustle and excitement. The dresses—the outside show of the business—had arrived from Paris, while the fruits of the sewing-machine and of the busy toil of the little village *modiste* were already packed. A superb gift from Sir Everard had just come—when had they not been coming through all these past dreary weeks?—but

this outweighed them all. He sent her 'a few diamonds,' he modestly wrote; 'would she gratify him by wearing them on their marriage-day?'

'Most certainly not,' she exclaimed petulantly; 'diamonds and sapphires are well enough, but not for one's wedding-day; they should have been diamonds and pearls!'

'*Ah, que ces sont jolis! ah, Mademoiselle, que vous êtes heureuse!*' burst from the lips of the admiring but secretly envious boarders as they crowded round Rose and her casket of jewels. She lifts the necklet with its glittering pendant, fastens in the small ear-rings into her shell-like ears, clasps the magnificent bracelet round her slender wrist, and plunges into the loose coils of her splendid hair an arrow of the same superb gems. She wears a white dress on this sweet spring night, and her cheeks have a lovely tinge upon them, while her eyes—those large, dark, passionate eyes—sparkle more brilliantly than the flashing gems with which she is decked.

'Where is Miss Forth?' she exclaims, glancing round on the little company. 'Is she quite indifferent to marriage finery?'

Madame Duprès exclaimed, 'I will hand her up immediately. She is a devourer of books more than of jewels, this good and duty-loving Scottish young lady.'

Madame la Baronne, who is the *connoisseur* of the party in such matters, declares the jewels out-rival those presented to her by M. le Baron on a similar happy occasion.

The Demoiselles Bonillon furtively shrug their shoulders, and mutter that they have seen much finer; while Mrs. General Tomkins avers that thousands, nay, millions of francs would not purchase such a princely gift.

'Ah, what a rich and noble young gentleman your *fiancé* must be!' exclaims Madame la Baronne, in her voluble English; 'how I long to have one gleam of his face!'

Rose winced. 'Young!' Ah! she had been dumb on the subject of Sir Everard's age and looks. Her mother had enlightened them all, during their *séances* round the fire in the winter evenings, on his wealth and position and estates, and

they had pictured him an adoring lover, of course, but young and handsome too. What a revelation Rose felt it would be to them to see the old, bent man, which, in spite of his high hopes and 'recovering health,' she knew he would be! How they would shrug and simper and mock! She had thought of this before, but had put it from her. Now, however, within a few days of his coming, the whole thing seemed almost unbearable; and sparkling, as she stood, in the pride of conquest, and in the flush of admiration, so indispensable to her, even though that only of a few women in a Swiss *pension*, a feeling of shame filled her soul, and stained her soft cheek with a crimson dye. So real was this momentary feeling, that instinctively she put up her hand to unclasp the gems. A step on the staircase made her pause. Could the superior student, Miss Forth, be coming after all to see her?

'Ah! M. le Nord,' exclaimed the quiet, well-bred voice of Madame la Baronne, 'you come yet in good time; *entrez, entrez!*'

M. le Nord paused for a second, then advanced into the room, and bowing gracefully to the ladies, gazed at Rose with a strange expression on his bad face.

'Are not they superb?' said Madame la Baronne.

'They?' said M. le Nord.

'*Oui, mais oui, les diamants, Monsieur, où sont vos yeux?*'

'Most beautiful!' he answered, with the fascinating manner and look which thrilled Rose's soul. She met his glance; a whole world of meaning was in their exchanged looks; then gliding from them all, she flew to her room, and plucking the gems from her ears and arm, she flung them on the floor. For a moment, a great wave of love, or passion (it seems an outrage on the great affection to call it in the heart of such a woman love), rolled over her heart. Should she give up the golden slavery and yield to the persistent entreaties of her lover to fly with him?—whither she scarcely knew or cared, so it were away from all this.

'What has brought him back?' she asked herself again and again. She had told him her fate was sealed, that they must part, and he had gone away, only it would seem, however, for two or three days. And to return at this crisis! She stayed long in her room while the twilight deepened; at last she stole into the *salon*. No one was there. The air was delicious and balmy, every one had gone out. Presently Henriette came in.

'*Ah, Mademoiselle, M. le Nord vous cherche,*' she said in a half whisper; 'he sends you this billet,' holding out a note, which Rose snatched from her hand and read:

'The nightingale is singing; meet me in the grove'—

'Is the nightingale singing, Henriette?' cried Rose, as Mrs. Heywood came in with Madame la Baronne from a long stroll and gossip about the wedding; 'I want so to hear it. Come, Henriette, let us go to the grove!'

Henriette, who was ready to do anything and everything to indulge the whims of the boarders generally, and of such a one as Rose especially, who had given her several of her cast-off dresses, and a little turquoise ring—Fred's gift—'too paltry to be worn with rubies and pearls,' who rather, besides, liked the excitement of helping the lovers, immediately consented to go.

'We shall be late,' said Rose, glancing at her mother. 'The evening is so heavenly, and I have few nights here now. *Allons*, Henriette!'

The two girls walked away. How warm and balmy the air was, and how clear the sky overhead! How still was everything around—a luscious, subtle hour!

As they entered the grove, a figure appeared, and Henriette moved into a side-path.

'You have come,' said M. le Nord, springing forward. 'I knew you would! What a world of misery'—he speaks English perfectly, and without an accent—'has been heaped up for me these few miserable days! And you'—drawing her hand within his arm, and looking steadily into her eyes.

'I—I have been living out the last chapter of my life o—f freedom—a—nd'—

'Hush, you will madden me, Miss Heywood.'

'But,' added Rose, shivering at the rashness of their present interview, 'I h—ave prom—ised Sir Everard, a—nd'—

'What are promises made under compulsion? Nothing!' with a gesture of impatience. 'Your soul, your noble, pure soul shrinks, I know, from such sacrifice!'

'Indeed, indeed it does'—

'Then fly with me. Let us live in the love of each other, not on the fickle smile of the multitude.'

Rose's hand trembles on his arm; every falling leaf in this secluded spot makes her start. The stars, as they begin to crowd into the clear vault above, are so many silent witnesses of the stolen interview, and of the tumult in her heart.

M. le Nord is in earnest, Rose is not. She is yielding merely to the intoxication of the moment. She considers the world would be ill lost for love. She could not live without admiration and excitement, and had no dream of giving up Sir Everard and his gold for this ardent but unknown lover. He, however, presses his suit. She cannot choose but listen to such delicious words of love. They carry her back to Fred and his boyish adoration and his grown-up devotion; then Gertrude steps before her mind's eye in her dignified grace and pure beauty. Here Egerton stands forth beside her, and a jealous spasm strikes her heart, and fills it with deadliest hate and absolute thirst for revenge. 'Avenged I must, I shall be!' she mentally cried, 'and that I can only be by marrying Sir Everard, poisoning his mind against Egerton, and diverting from him all possible inheritance. Egerton is proud,' she argues with herself. 'He believes his uncle is now too old and infirm to marry. He expects the title, the estates. Ah! I will ruin his hopes.'

The marble paleness of Rose's face while this mental picture passed before her, and her lover thought she was weighing his

words, and bated his breath to catch her answer, gave place to a deep flush as the sound of footsteps broke the stillness of this leafy spot. The path to the neighbouring town lay through this forest; few, it is true, came and went by it, but now some one was approaching. The tread of feet sounded on the withered branches of the trees which here and there lay scattered about. Rose's fingers twitched on Le Nord's arm; but before she could withdraw them, Mademoiselle Lafleur appeared, the last of all the boarders Rose would have wished to see. She had a sharp tongue, and to be in her power was to be at the mercy of one who considered a bit of scandal as a blessing to break in on the monotony of a dull life. She came forward smilingly, and after a few words, passed on rapidly, saying it was getting late, and without any escort she must hurry home. It was different with Mademoiselle; she could stay under the stars and be happy. Rose became cold with fright. 'That woman will tell she has seen us!' she gasped out.

'What if she does?' answered M. le Nord eagerly. 'Act out the convictions of your heart, Miss Heywood, and all will be well.'

Rose, who did not so much fear doing wrong or doubtful things as being discovered to have done them, grew nervous, and insisted on going directly home.

M. le Nord lost hope. She could care little for him, he thought, if the mere dread of suspicion could drive her from him. What a walk home that was among the leafy limes and chestnuts! How intoxicating were the tones of his voice, and the tender words he uttered! Drawing her hand closer within his arm, he reassured her fears; implored her to be braver; wiled her to take one more turn and yet another; and finally, as they approached the Château Vert, extorted from her a promise that she would tell him his fate next night in the garden under the walnut tree. At last he let her go. He would come in later; no one would suspect.

In the garden Henriette appeared. She had been watching

for Rose, and the two girls entered the house together. Passing into the *salon*, they found all the ladies busy, as usual, with their fingers and with their tongues. Madame la Baronne started, and exclaimed, 'What, Mademoiselle! have you seen a ghost? You are as white as Mont Blanc!'

'The evening is chill,' answered Rose, glancing round for Mademoiselle Lafleur, who, however, was absorbed with her sketch-book.

'Chill!' cried several shrill voices; 'we have been employing our peacock fans to enliven the air.'

'Ah! but you have walked but slowly,' said Mademoiselle Lafleur, glaring up at Rose with a malicious smile.

'I have walked home so fast,' said Rose haughtily, 'that I can now walk only to my room! so, ladies, *bon soir*, *bon soir*,' and bowing gracefully to them all, she glided away.

The interview under the walnut tree next night was stolen and short, and to M. le Nord most unsatisfactory. In the interval, Rose's pride had rushed to the rescue, and her ambition carried the day. She must, she told him, sacrifice herself to her promise, and her mother, and her fate.

The day before the wedding Sir Everard arrived, and never did Rose feel more keenly mortified than when introducing to this clique of critical women her future husband. He looked older by half-a-dozen years than when they parted a few months before, while she looked more radiantly beautiful than ever. Many honeyed compliments were paid to the bride, as is the custom with brides, by these jealous women, but she was not blind to the scornful titter of the Demoiselles Bonillon, or to the still more withering looks of Miss Lizzie Forth, who said something within her hearing about honest independence as contrasted with golden slavery! After a long *tête-à-tête* in the garden with Sir Everard, she hastened to her room. He had detailed his projected wedding tour, told her of the gorgeous improvements on his hotel, and satiated her with hackneyed

love-phrases, which somehow, from his faded lips, fell with depressing flatness on her spirit. At last he left her to go to his hotel, she having extorted from him a promise that he would not come again to the Château, that indeed he would not see her again till they should meet next evening in the little ivy-covered church to be married.

Her heart was heavy as she hastened to her room. Had she had a mother on whose bosom she could have pillowed her head, and poured out the feelings which so confused and agitated her jaded spirit, there was hope for her still! Ah, had she known that Friend on whom to cast her burden, as her early friend Gertrude was now casting all her sins and cares, she might even yet have been delivered from the unnatural yoke she was taking upon her! But she had never yielded to His grace who cares for the weary and heavy-laden; never been made to feel that His service, be it in poverty or in wealth, is one of perfect freedom. She was a stranger to such truths; her life was drifting on in a rudderless boat, to what?

As she entered her room, any relentings were put to flight by the sights that met her eye, and her heart hardened on the spot. Her travelling-boxes, with 'Lady Egerton' marked upon them, stood on the floor. Over them her 'maid,' her 'new own maid,' bent, packing away the finery which had been exhibiting during the day. Her bridal dress lay displayed, a soft white satin dress, with veil of Brussels lace and pearl ornaments, which Sir Everard had brought her to-day. 'Family things,' he said, which he had had re-set, and which pleased even her fastidious taste. The pretty travelling costume of navy-blue, with hat to match, lay side by side with it, while her jewel-case and bag, with the many nick-nacks dear to a girl's heart, were sprinkled over the room. The *coup d'œil* was complete. It was the last clever stroke of her mother's fertile brain, and it slew with a blow, as it was meant to do, any lingering hopes of freedom, lighting at the same moment into a blaze the sparks of ambition which had been gathering

strength with her years. The golden hinges were turning for her which should shut the door for ever upon youth's hopes and the best aspirations of a true woman's heart! Yes; but they were ushering her into the brilliant lot for which her mother had sighed and schemed, and for which her own habits of mind and life had been preparing her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking.'

MORE than a year has passed since Rose was married in the little Swiss church. A year? an age! and not the golden age either! Yet she has had much of what she bargained for. The honeymoon was spent in travelling, in a style, too, befitting the rank and beauty of 'My Lady.' Everywhere she was admired. Men paid court to her; and women, if they hated her for her attractions and her wealth, which formed such a fine setting for her charms, were forced to yield her the place of 'Queen of Beauty.' In Paris, her hotel was the most fashionable resort during the season, her style of dress and equipage the best. She plunged into the heart of gaiety, indifferent about the ailments of Sir Everard, which increased with the life of excitement he was forced to lead, and careless of his comfort so long as her own tastes were indulged. And was she satisfied? Yes, and No. Her vanity was fed, her passion for money and dress was indulged. Her love of gaiety, and gaiety with all the accessories of position and riches, was fully met. But her heart—her home? The one, feeding on husks, was famishing still; the other was so artificial, so void of the elements which make up home, that she fled from it to every open door.

Sir Everard was no less dissatisfied and disappointed. He discovered, when too late, his wife's utter indifference to himself, and her inordinate selfishness, which made her take every-

thing and give nothing in return; no love, no care, nothing which he felt entitled on the lowest grounds of justice to expect from her did he get. He had been made a stalking-horse for her to mount and ride her hobbies! He began to grumble at her extravagance, to hint first at retrenchment, and finally to pull in his purse-strings. Her proud spirit chafed and rose in rebellion; bitter recrimination followed, and gradual alienation began:

> 'It was the little rift within the lute
> Which by and by would make the music mute.'

Mrs. Heywood, who had come to Paris, and whose presence in the hotel did not improve matters, winced at the state of affairs, but hoped much from the interesting event to which, early in the spring, she looked forward.

In February the 'son and heir' was born, and Rose's craving heart closed in greedy affection over her baby-boy. He was a weak, puny child, and his life quivered for days in the balance. But he lived and grew, though the most partial eye was obliged to pronounce him plain. During the past year Sir Everard had had more than one letter from Egerton, who had heard nothing of the marriage from his uncle himself until it was *un fait accompli.* In his letter, Sir Everard made no reference to Anton, and Harry felt assured that he had not mentioned him to Rose. He replied respectfully, but decidedly, calling upon his uncle to tell his wife about his son, and declaring his intention to inform Lady Egerton himself should his uncle persist in keeping silent. Sir Everard did not reply, and hoped, as time wore on, that 'the thing,' as he vaguely expressed it, 'would blow over.' Besides, Harry might die in those yellow-fever regions, or be killed in some of his brave exploits, and he would be saved the misery he knew he should endure at his wife's hands if ever he should have to introduce to her a hitherto undreamt-of and nearly grown-up step-son. For however in word he denied his belief in Anton, he knew and felt the truth of his existence; his seared but not yet extinguished conscience clamoured

now and then for a hearing, while his knowledge of Harry's disinterested generosity and unfluctuating resolve, at all ruin to his own hopes, to substantiate Anton's claims, made his heart cowardly, and widened the breach between Rose and himself.

Meanwhile, Rose's love for her child, contrary to her mother's expectations, grew and intensified. She loved the little frail thing ardently, and she was proud of it—proud that her child should be heir of his father's ancestral title and broad acres, and proud—for the truth of the mingled feelings in this worldly woman's heart must be told—of this unconscious weapon of revenge against him whom she called her enemy because he had dared to slight her love, had presumed to treat her 'as no gentleman would or could treat a lady!' A satisfactory side-thrust—a blow in the dark, so to speak, would thus, too, be given to the pride and ambition of Gertrude, with whom still she could not help associating Egerton, in spite of all the efforts she had put forth to separate them from each other.

A smart altercation, the beginning of a serious quarrel between Mrs. Heywood and Sir Everard, arose between them on the occasion of the announcement of the baby's birth. It appeared in *Galignani* and in the *Times*, shorn of all its honours: 'At Paris, on the 10th instant, Lady Egerton—a son.' What could he mean? He had entrusted it doubtless to some one to insert, and it had been carelessly done. But Sir Everard would give no explanation, and made no effort to remedy the mistake; whereupon Mrs. Heywood penned an elaborate if not over-grammatical paragraph, which the Chevalier had put into one or two of the principal Paris and London newspapers, in which full justice, to say the least, was done to her illustrious grandson.

This composition, strange to say, fell under the eye of Major Egerton as he lay on his couch invalided in an up-country station in one of the West Indian islands. All his past care of Anton, and his generous, self-denying hopes on his behalf,

seemed on the eve of failing of their fulfilment. He had, as he hoped, recovered from a severe attack of fever, when a relapse, caused by the intense heat of an unusually hot season, laid him low again, and a time of terrible prostration ensued. He himself believed he should not recover, and his soul reposed in peaceful, happy trust upon Him 'whom having not seen he loved.' He pencilled a letter to Sir Everard, in which, as from the brink of the grave, he conjured him to do justice to his son, and to give him his rightful place in his heart and home. He spoke of his own deep love for the boy, of whose fine disposition and talents, he assured Sir Everard, he would be justly proud. The letter broke off abruptly, the writer being too weak for more. After it was gone, Egerton, whose mind was relieved, revived somewhat, and the doctor of the regiment, a warm friend of his own, urged upon him to go home. His constitution was not suited for the climate, and never, he assured him, would be for such 'steamy holes' as he now was in. But Egerton refused; he was getting better, and he would like to stick to his post, and share with his brother-soldiers the discomforts as well as the honours of their common life. Dr. Petley watched over him, and ministered to him with the devotion, not only of a medical man, but of a warmly-attached friend. Any further relapse would be fraught with danger.

Anton's letters, always welcome, were doubly so in this *hors-de-combat* state of matters. The boy wrote regularly, telling his cousin of his ups and downs, his struggles with his temper and his indolence, his successes in his studies and his failures, his growing disinclination for law, or any other stay-at-home profession, and his enthusiastic longing for a military life. He was the sunshine of Egerton's heart, the one being on earth, he believed, who really loved him, and on whom he might freely and safely let out his affectionate nature. Their correspondence was a great mutual pleasure, and the hopes of both reached forward to a renewal of former happy intercourse. Anton's letter from the Fort surprised 'Cousin Harry' inde-

scribably. Anton under the same roof with her, with Gertrude! It made his heart beat in a way it had not done for many a long day before to think of the boy's happiness. Over and over he read—devoured his words. He fancied he saw her in her sorrow and loneliness. What would he not have given to have been permitted to be near, to try to comfort her!

But Jack! where was he? and was this privilege not his? No, Anton's next piece of news was the astounding intelligence that *he* had started for Australia! This Egerton read in its true light, that Gertrude had refused him; and Bruce? he was engaged to Miss Murrie. Gertrude alone,—the peerless, noble, and, he perfectly believed, Christian girl was alone—unmarried, at least. Anton's boyish enthusiasm over her thrilled Egerton's being, and her kindness to the friendless and really homeless boy touched him to the heart. A gleam of hope, which flickered up in his breast, that possibly *he* might have something to do with her refusal of others, was soon, however, quenched by the recollection of his letter, and of the terrible, unbroken silence on the part of both father and daughter. If only his battery had been at home, instead of in this murky isle! But then it wasn't, and all their lives were shaped by the kind and unerring hand of their Father in heaven. The fever of the country, which, as the reader has been told, seized him, passed by, but the languor and prostration which superinduced, gave rise to more anxious fears on the part of Dr. Petley than the attack of fever itself. But as long as it was possible for him to stay on, in the hope of resuming his duty, Egerton would yield to no entreaties to go home.

'You are as stubborn a patient as ever I came across, Egerton,' said Dr. Petley, one oppressive afternoon, as they sat in their tent amid the almost stifling heat. 'Bless me, if I had as good a reason for sick-leave as you have I'd be off like a shot!'

'I've been sent home from the heat before,' said Egerton, languidly lifting his eyes from his book, 'and was told then

that a second time would be my last. Hot regions are nearly fatal to me. But I shrink from leaving other men to scramble through the miseries of such a climate while I am breathing cool breezes at home; and I know that if I go home invalided again, I shall never be considered fit for foreign service.'

'Well, you've had a good slice of it; and your family prospects are good, not to speak of your private means.'

'Prospects! I have none.'

'Pshaw! Besides, with your turn for languages and reading you could get an appointment in the War Office at home, or a secretaryship, or something.'

A light gleamed in Egerton's eyes.

'Could I? I have pictured myself as so utterly shelved if I left the army.'

'Lively pictures you call up for your amusement—eh! There's Duffin. They sent out for him to go home, and be Principal of a Scotch University! He wasn't a soldier certainly, but they'll take a man from any service that will answer their purpose. They want men of talent at home as much as we want men with sound livers out here. The Professorship of Oriental Languages at ——, for instance. I'm sure the directors to a man would vote for you if there was a vacancy.'

'*If!*' said Egerton, as he drank in the good doctor's words. Was it possible that any such post might be awaiting him, any such outlet for his 'languages, his inveterate love of study,' as Dr. Petley called his literary tastes?

He could not tell, and he must not indulge such delicious day-dreams, glowing, as they were, with the thought, yes, and the *love* of—*her!*

'If that old baronet would only die slick off!' thought the rattling but kind-hearted doctor. 'Anything to be "a call of duty" home. But he'll stick on here. He's not the man to go sneaking home on a hazy certificate and leave other men to do the work while he's enjoying himself. No—no—he's made of nobler stuff. Well, I'm sure, for our own sakes,

we don't want him away, but—but—he runs risks by staying on here!'

Egerton's eyes had again dropped upon his book while the doctor betook himself to a home newspaper which a brother-officer had just brought him.

'Is this any of your Egertons,' he said presently, 'this long palaver over some one being born into this sunshiny world? No vale of tears business for him, evidently, if he's to get all that is here made over to him, a newly-arrived imp of humanity.' And he read aloud Mrs. Heywood's paragraph about the 'son and heir.'

Egerton started. 'What! where is that?' he exclaimed.

'There, my good fellow, in the *Times* itself,' handing him the paper. 'No interloper on your prospects, I hope.'

'No, no,' said Egerton, as he read the announcement attentively.

'Son and heir to ancestral title—Kalme estates, London residence (nonsense), property abroad (nonsense), military fame, immense wealth.' 'Who in all the world,' exclaimed Egerton, 'can have put in such twaddle?' and with gathering indignation, 'such lies too!' Not his uncle, he was sure; he would not have dared. 'Son,' certainly; but 'heir,' he knew better than to risk such a public untruth. His mind recurred to Mrs. Heywood. In the exaggerated wording of the announcement he detected her hand, and, through it, the vain pretentiousness of her frivolous soul.

But she had over-reached herself. Anton, in his defencelessness, his just title to all that was here calmly handed over to another, stood out before him. He was the one being on earth who could prove his identity, could lift him out of the cruel obscurity to which his own father had doomed him, and place him in his rightful position. And the longer this was delayed, the more difficult it would be to accomplish. Had Sir Everard not married, or had this son not been born, the exposure might have been delayed. Well did Egerton know the blow it would be to his uncle's pride and self-

importance, keenly did he feel the pain of the part he himself should have to play in the matter. But his resolution never for a moment swerved. It was justice, and all personal loss,—for that his uncle would carry out his many threats against himself he well knew,—all discomfort were flung to the winds in his resolution to do what he considered to be his plain duty to his cousin, and his cousin's dead mother.

For long Egerton sat buried in thought; then starting up, he exclaimed, 'Petley, I must go home at once!'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

'A future with an unimagined face
Will break on thee and me.'

WHO *is* the fine-looking old gentleman?' asked Gertrude of Anton, on the evening of the exciting day, as they sat in Colonel Ellerslie's little drawing-room. The Colonel and Dermid are absorbed in chess, and Aunt Dorothy has gone on some anxious errand about to-morrow's breakfast to the cook, while Gertrude and Anton are having a 'nice chat' together.

'I haven't looked,' said Anton, putting his hand quickly into his pocket for the card he had received. '*Hélas*, it is gone!' as rapidly he plunged from one pocket to another, but all in vain; 'I must have dropped it in the scuffle to get away.'

'What a pity!' exclaimed Gerty, looking up from her work. She is putting the finishing touches to a dress she has been embroidering for Kate. 'I did so want to know his name!'

'I *am* sorry,' said Anton. 'Did you ever see him before?'

'Never, but I used to know his—the lady.'

'His daughter! I didn't like the look of her.'

'His wife!'

'Miss Ellerslie? No, surely! but he's an awful handsome-looking old man. I'm sure he won't forget what I'm like, at any rate, if he never sees me again. I never got such a stare in my whole life before.'

'O Anton, search again for his card. I do want to know his name,' said Gerty.

Another ransack of the pockets, but no card!

'What's the lady's name, if you know her?'

'She was Rose Heywood, but she married a—I think a Frenchman.'

'Oh! he's not French—not foreign at all, I'm sure,' said Anton. 'I know *them;* I'm half German, you know, Miss Ellerslie.'

'I know, Anton; but some one, Lady Morell it was, said Rose had married a Frenchman.'

'*He's* English, I'm sure; but what a proud, dressed-up woman *she* is, don't you think?'

'I thought she looked very handsome,' said Gerty, 'changed since I knew her, but more beautiful!'

'She's not my style,' cried Anton. 'She had black eyes, and painted cheeks, if you call that beauty, and lots of jewellery; but she looked the sort of woman that would put poison into your soup or thrust a dagger into you if she wanted to get rid of you.'

'Anton!' said Gertrude, laughing.

'And if he is her husband, that delicate-looking old milord, she treats him horribly; marching about with other people, and leaving him to shift for himself. I think she'll be a dark-souled as well as a dark-eyed woman! If you only heard Cousin Harry upon people like that!'

'Does he not like dark people?' asked Gerty, with the wild thump at her heart which always now comes whenever Egerton's name is mentioned.

'No, it's fair people he admires. When I spoke to him about the photo you know, he said it was the loveliest portrait he had ever seen, but that it didn't half do justice to'—he paused.

'To?'

'You, of course. It was your photo, Miss Ellerslie; you're so exactly like it in that dress!' Anton went on. She wore a white dress. 'And these flowers too; are these the lilies Major Willoughby sent you to-day?'

'Oh no!'

'But they were very pretty.'

'Very, but'—

'You only wear flowers from people you like?'

'Yes,' while a deep flush again overspread her face, called up by Anton's words. What might have been, came rushing into her mind, as after a little, lifting her eyes, she glanced at her father. There he sat, with bent brows and eager eyes rivetted on the board, playing his game at chess, beating, as usual, his young opponent by the skill and strategy of his moves. Not less successfully, he believed, had he played for her the game of her life, deluding himself into the belief that it was for her sake, and hers only, he had swept away her knight from her side; contenting himself, now that the Honourable Jack was gone, with building fresh castles-in-the-air as to how he should keep her well and happy, but still keep her beside himself.

Thus in the drama of the life-story we are relating, all unconscious of the part each is playing, one of the actors is absorbed in chess; another is trembling from the mingled feelings called up in her heart of hope and fear; while the third, this outcast, homeless boy, is supplying the missing link which is soon to unite the parted pieces of a chain of love, for even now *he* is hurrying towards them whose coming alone can bring to the two beings dearest to him on earth gladness and joy; yet he is drawn hither by no selfish love or worldly interest, but by the high and noble principle within, prompting him to 'love mercy and to do justly.'

'Please, sir,' said the footman, coming into the room and addressing Anton, 'a gentleman in the drawing-room for you.'

'For me?' said Anton, surprised. 'It'll be for you, Dermid; your father!'

Dermid jumped up, upsetting the chess-board in his haste, and throwing the pieces on the floor, scarcely stopping to apologize to the petrified Colonel, as he dashed out of the room.

'The game was mine,' the Colonel grumbled out, 'if'—

Ah, Colonel! there are 'ifs' in your games too, as you shall presently see!

'It's not my father after all,' said Dermid, looking rather crestfallen as he hurried back; 'it *is* for you, Anton,' and he stooped to pick up the fallen knights.

'The handsome old run-over gentleman?' exclaimed Anton eagerly.

'The old fiddlesticks,' said Dermid, in a very put-out sort of tone; 'a young, awful good-looking man; *but* make haste, he told me to send you at once.'

'Cousin Harry, I believe!' cried Anton, as with a bound he vaulted from the room.

'Rough schoolboy manners!' muttered the Colonel; 'what in the name of wonder *is* it all?' appealing to Gertrude. 'Try, my dear, and make them understand the exceedingly delicate state of my nerves and digestion. I hope Dorothea is remembering the broiled sole for breakfast, and the'—

But the remaining part of the Colonel's contemplated breakfast never reached Gertrude's ear; for the door, at this moment, was pushed open, and Anton entered the room, followed by —Cousin Harry!

The surprise to Colonel Ellerslie was startling. Had he been forewarned of this most unexpected visitor, he might have been forearmed; but to have this man bounced in upon him by a thoughtless schoolboy, into his private sitting-room too, where Major Willoughby himself had only once been permitted to enter, it was simply monstrous! His good-breeding, however, came to the rescue, and he received Major Egerton politely if coldly.

And Gertrude? Ah! her tell-tale face looked the welcome which her lips were unable to utter, while Egerton's gaze, and the lingering pressure of his hand, as once more he held her little trembling one within his own, told to her the fact of his true and unchanged love.

Presently a refreshing *divertissement* in the peculiar and

rather embarrassing state of affairs was made by Aunt Dorothy, who, hurrying up to make a few private inquiries of Gertrude as to the precise concoction of the sauce which 'Archibald must always have with his broiled sole,' found indeed that 'the scene was changed' from the quiet one she had left. This friend from abroad, to whom she was introduced, was he the cause of Gertrude's animated look and brilliant colour, which contrasted so strongly with the Colonel's reserved and stately demeanour? She was puzzled; but the lively rattle of Anton's tongue, and the wild exuberance of his spirits, saved her from any present analysis of the elements about her.

Egerton won her heart on the spot. The perfection of his manners, his style, his words, took her by storm; and when, after half-an-hour's visit, he and the boys left, she gave him a hospitable invitation to return. This he accepted heartily and frankly, apologizing for having intruded so unceremoniously into their family circle, and adding, in words full of meaning, which only Gertrude understood, 'I little knew when I knocked at your door whom I was to see. They told me at Anton's school, where I went straight off, that he was with kind friends at this address. I thank you, Miss Ellerslie,' bowing to Aunt Dorothy, as he said good-night, 'for your own kindness, as well as that of the Colonel and Miss Ellerslie,' turning towards them, 'to my dear boy.' Again, as he shook hands with Gertrude, there was in his eye the wistful, tender gaze and the soft pressure of his hand. And he felt and knew that she understood him and reciprocated his love.

Early next day he called. Colonel Ellerslie was in his room; Aunt Dorothy was out; Gertrude alone was in the drawing-room as he entered.

'Miss Ellerslie!' as he took and held her hand.

'Major Egerton!' Not another word would come, while her eyes, those blue, true eyes, for one look of which he had many a day hungered, glistened with tears.

He looked at her in her pure fresh beauty, so simply dressed in a fresh morning dress, with its lingering touches of mourning

about it. Was it really her? and was she trembling with emotion at the sight of him? He led her to a seat, still holding her hand, and then said, unable any longer to restrain the words, which seemed to leap from his heart as from some long repressed but now overflowing fountain, 'Gertrude, my love, my beauty, my noble one! say, oh say, will you let me love you? Can you give me any hope that you will love me in return?'

'O Major Egerton,' as she drooped her head, 'I have loved you all the time, and have been trying so h—ard not!'—

'Not to—Gertrude?'

'She told us you were married, or at least engaged. I had no right to suppose you cared for me!'

'I wrote you months ago!'

'Yes; but—but—I never saw that letter till just a little while ago.'

'Did Colonel Ellerslie not give you my letter?' in a tone of great surprise.

'Never! He must have had a reason, of course, but he never breathed it, and has never, even after I told him I had found it in his desk, named it to me.'

'My love,' as he drew her to him, 'and *she* told me you were engaged to Jack,—once, indeed, said you were married to him.'

'Who ever said so, Major Egerton?' raising her flashing eyes and fixing them eagerly upon him.

'Miss Heywood—Lady Egerton, I beg her pardon!'

'Rose? She of all people in the world! She knew *for certain that* would never be. Ah! and it was she who wrote all these wrong and untrue things about you; and she—s—he broke Fred's heart!' in a sort of wail.

And Rose stood before the mind's eye of the two she had envied for their nobleness and hated for their goodness and mutual love for each other, a detected deceiver, the cruel but defeated enemy of their happiness!

'Surely,' said Major Egerton, as he rested her golden head on his shoulder,—'surely we have been kept for each other.'

'Surely,' said Gertrude, with a look in her eyes of unutterable love and repose.

Together they sat as the moments flew past, pouring out the pent-up feelings of their hearts. All aching doubt was now lifted from their minds. Each felt strong in the love of the other. If the Colonel's strange conduct could be explained, and his objection removed, their cup of bliss would run over. And hope beat high within them both!

At last Aunt Dorothy entered the room. She had been meaning to enter for the past hour, wondering what the handsome but stranger man could possibly mean by staying such an unconscionable time with Gertrude, yet scarcely liking to intrude. When at last she summoned courage and appeared, Gertrude sprang to meet her.

'Aunt Dorothy!' she exclaimed, 'Major Egerton; he wants to speak to you!' and she darted from the room, leaving him to unfold his tale, and enlist her sympathies on his behalf. She knew the soft side of her maiden aunt, over whom a man's influence was always so much more effectual than that of any woman, especially that of a man of breeding and good family! So she left Egerton to fascinate his victim, knowing how all-powerful Aunt Dorothy's word would be with Colonel Ellerslie. Nor did she reckon in vain. Aunt Dorothy was charmed with Egerton, and it was no ordinary inspection he had to stand from her critical eye, as with her cool, practised glance she scanned his dress, his hands, the twist of his moustache, and the shape of his boots! His manners were perfect, and the manly but deeply tender way in which he pressed his suit for Gertrude touched a latent chord in the heart of this woman of the world. His unconscious casual mention of friends in the very forefront of rank and wealth gave a prestige to his position, and carried the day. She gave him at the end of their long talk her hearty assurances of satisfaction with him for a future nephew, and promised to plead his cause with the Colonel. That the Colonel had some pique against him, Egerton feared from the fact of his with-

holding his letter from Gertrude, an action on his part which had well-nigh shipwrecked their happiness. But the kind Providence who had watched over them both, and brought them together again in so unexpected a way,—He, into whose hands they had both 'committed their way,'—would, he felt sure, 'bring it to pass.' Nor were his hopes and trust disappointed.

Colonel Ellerslie, it is true, winced under the discovery of his conduct to Egerton, still, however, excusing himself to himself, by insisting that his motive was his fatherly solicitude for Gertrude. But the inner consciousness of his doubtful fairness towards her made him the more easy to be persuaded—the Honourable Jack being so entirely off the field—to give his consent with grace. The spirit of forgiveness on Egerton's part, manifested by the most dutiful concern for his health and comfort, was not lost upon the Colonel, while the recovered looks and spirits of Gertrude cheered and gladdened his heart.

Egerton told him of his modest competency, of Anton's succession to his uncle, of his probable retirement from the army, and his wish for employment at home, making not—as most men do on such occasions—the best of himself, but the very worst.

'But,' he added, 'I love your daughter with the deepest, tenderest passion of my heart, and it will be the joy of my life to prove myself worthy of such a treasure, and if you will allow me, sir, to try to be a son to yourself.'

Colonel Ellerslie stretched out his hand, and grasped Egerton's cordially. He thought, too, of his dead son, and the hopes that were buried with him, and said, with more pathos in his tone than ever Egerton had heard before, that he knew no man more likely to fill Fred's place in his daughter's heart and his own! The deep vein of selfishness which pervaded all Colonel Ellerslie's thoughts and words and actions was not now conspicuous by its absence; but Egerton did not stay to analyse his motives, he only thankfully listened to the

words, not merely of permission to have his daughter, but of something like welcome into his family.

What a light was in Gertrude's eye, and a spring in her step, as, at the close of Egerton's interview with her father, she was summoned to his presence to receive his stately embrace and blessing.

'I did not tell Egerton all I knew of him,—it's well to keep young men modest,' her father said to her, as she stood beside him, radiant in the flush of her new-born happiness, 'but he is considered one of the bravest officers in the army. If he gives up his promotion and prospects for you, Gerty, and I told him such was my *sine quâ non* to your engagement, we must make it up somehow to him!'

Gertrude smiled a conscious smile, but did not interrupt her father, who went on: 'Apart from my own fortune for you when I am done with it, your mother's fortune has been accumulating all these years. I have kept it sacredly for you; but if you had married without my consent, or gone abroad against my wishes, I should have turned it into some other channel. You will be rich, Gerty; but Egerton knows nothing of that.'

Another radiant smile played round Gertrude's beautiful face, not at finding herself an unexpected heiress, but at the happy consciousness that had she been the poorest woman in the realm, she would no less have been Harry Egerton's choice.

CHAPTER XXXV.

'Because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

' 'Tis much he dares,
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety.'

IR EVERARD and Rose were meanwhile drifting hourly apart. Yet had any wise and faithful friend been near to try the part of peace-maker, a happier state of matters might have been brought about. Sir Everard was proud of his wife, but jealous to the last degree, while she grew more and more irritated and defiant of his authority. Even an ordinary return of attention on her part and pleasure in his society would have been a sufficient reward for the indulgence with which he treated her; but her proud spirit refused him even this. Her extravagance, too, was ruinous, and any attempt on his part to curtail her expenditure drew down upon his head a torrent of abuse. She plunged into a whirl of gaiety in London, determined to have as much enjoyment as possible before settling down for the autumn months at Kalme, where Sir Everard had resolved to go. He was now too much of an invalid to venture into the scenes in which Rose delighted, and he pined for country quiet. The arrival in London of M. le Nord disquieted him greatly. The man kept turning up in a most offensive way, and neither Sir Everard's threats nor Mrs. Heywood's expostulations could prevail on Rose to forbid him her presence; now he had her

in his power, not merely by the strange fascination which he exerted over her, but by the knowledge of her 'domestic misery,' which she had confided to him. What more disgraceful or sinful confidence can there be than that given by a woman to a man against her own husband?

M. le Nord fanned the flame of family discord, magnified each fancied slight on the part of Sir Everard, and held up her life before her as one of slavery! She started at his boldness, his insolence, but would not shake herself free from him, while his society, his sympathy, became day by day more indispensable to her. Each day she found herself getting more and more involved with him, until at last Sir Everard forbade her to have any intercourse whatever with this 'foreign man.' She retaliated in the most exasperating way, telling Sir Everard that he had only one step farther to go after shutting the door against all her friends, to shut it against herself. Regardless of her insulting words, he repeated his command, and struck a knell at her not yet utterly hardened heart. At this miserable juncture in their domestic affairs Egerton dropped upon the scene. None of his late letters to his uncle had been acknowledged, and on his arriving in Paris, it was only to be told that his uncle was in London. He wrote to Sir Everard from Paris, informing him of his arrival, and the cause of his home-coming, appealing powerfully once more to his fatherly feelings on behalf of Anton, and respectfully but firmly assuring him that, should he still hold back from acknowledging Anton, and reinstating him in his just rights, —all the necessary papers and witnesses to prove which he possessed,—he should be compelled to establish his identity in a much more public way than he knew Sir Everard would wish. Egerton followed his letter to London, and waited anxiously for a summons from his uncle. None, however, came, and, two days after his arrival, he called at the private hotel where his uncle was.

He sent in his card, and was requested to go to Sir Everard's room. He was ill, but would see him. As Egerton

entered the luxurious sitting-room where his uncle was, he was shocked at the very perceptible change for the worse in his appearance.

'Ah, Harry!' he said, rising to meet him, 'you blood-thirsty hound, you have tracked me out! to find me held by the horns in a thicket of briars!' He smiled a wan, miserable smile, and looked shaken and nervous. He was still suffering, he told Egerton, from the effects of an accident which, but for the intrepidity of a brave youth, would have been his death. He talked on about it with all the garrulous minuteness of an old and selfish man.

'That boy's face has never left me, it is before me night and day. I never in this life saw him before; he is an additional argument to my belief in a pre-existent state. Every time the door opens I expect to see him walk in and tell me all about it. But it is two days since, and no appearance of him. I am thinking of advertising, I am so eager to see him. If he does not turn up to-day, I shall put it in the *Times* to-morrow. That boy has fixed himself in my heart. I shall, I must see him!'

Presently Egerton inquired for Lady Egerton. A cloud fell upon his uncle's face as he answered, 'I haven't seen her to-day yet. She is with—with her child, I suppose!'

Unintentionally, Sir Everard had opened the way for Egerton. He went straight to the point, and a long and engrossing conversation took place.

Sir Everard, enfeebled by illness, and disappointed in his new domestic hopes, was less hard and impracticable on the subject than Egerton had ever before found him. A sort of half-lingering desire to have a son old enough to cheer, if not to comfort him, was in his heart, together with a certain relenting for the cruel part he had acted towards the boy. Of all these 'softenings,' Egerton availed himself. One less acute or less deeply interested in the matter might not have detected such subtle changes of feeling, but not one of them was lost upon Egerton. With exquisite tact and feeling, he pressed

Anton's claims, insinuating, too, on his uncle's mind the thought of the relief to his conscience which such a return to justice would inevitably bring.

Egerton was not only a high-principled man, but an intrepid thinker and a brave actor. When assured that he was in the right, it mattered not to him what power was arrayed against him. With a nature free from jealousy, and incapable of resentment, tolerant of the weaknesses of others, but intolerant of all meanness or deliberate malice and injustice, he expressed his views directly and unmistakeably. Yet was there in his manner something not only disarming of anger, but suggestive of hope to the offender.

'Bless me, Harry,' at last exclaimed Sir Everard, 'if you were pleading for yourself, I could understand all this, but to keep on like this, as you have done, for years too, about one who has all along stood in your own light, it beats me to make you out, boy! Whatever do you mean?'

'Simply,' said Harry, in his quiet, dignified, unmistakeable way, 'to do my duty to a defenceless boy, to see justice done to one who is entitled to the position God has given him.'

'But if you had kept him quiet, you, as I told you long ago, would have stepped into his position. I promised you, you remember?'

'Perfectly; but I had no *right* to it! and I never felt more insulted in my life than when you mooted to me such a thing.'

'What sort of boy is he?' quailing at such plain words.

'As fine a boy as ever lived; but even had he turned out, as, by your cruel neglect of him, he might have done, the veriest scoundrel, he is entitled to all the privileges of your son, and you are bound to put him in possession of them. I have come home for the purpose of securing these to him. The circumstance of your marriage and the birth of another son compel me to this immediate course. I shall not leave the country till it is accomplished.'

Sir Everard was silent, then said, 'But for—f—or Lady Egerton, I would give in, Harry; I've thought more about it

than you imagine, but you don't know what it will be. I believe it will kill her!'

'No fear,' said Egerton cheerfully. 'Besides, *whatever* the effect on her is, it is your duty to do it, and you will, I know, brace yourself up to that. What a relief it will be to you, and I will help you to get it as quietly done as possible!'

'Will you, Harry? Bless you for a noble, plucky fellow! But it will drive her to fury!' he added, with an excited, alarmed look. 'And—a—nd Harry, you have no atom of idea what she is! what that tongue of hers is!'

'But you *must* meet it, she *must* be told.'

'I had rather stand at the cannon's mouth than face her when she hears it!'

Unconsciously Sir Everard is unburdening to Egerton his weight of sorrow, finding in him whom for so long he has slighted and scorned the one true comforter and help left him on this earth.

'Let *me* do it,' said Egerton.

'You, Harry! Could you? Would you venture?' with a look of unspeakable relief.

'Certainly, if you cannot.'

'I believe she will kill herself; she has threatened frequently to make away with herself.'

'No fear; these sort of persons, with all their bravadoes, are the veriest cowards. Take my word for it, *she* will never hurt *herself!*'

So it was resolved that Harry should tell her all; and Sir Everard, ringing for his servant, sent a carefully worded message to summon Lady Egerton. After what seemed a long interval of suspense, the door opened, and 'My Lady' sailed in, followed by Gertrude!

Lady Egerton carried in her arm her baby-boy. She had met Gertrude in a milliner's show-room that morning, and with the impulse of a selfish, unsensitive nature, had gone up to her as if nothing very particular had happened since last they parted. She expressed her astonishment and delight

at meeting her again, feeling sure Gerty must be impressed with her beauty and style.

'Rose!' exclaimed Gerty, as a torrent of memories swept through her mind, and brought the hot blood mantling to her cheeks.

'You did not expect to see me, of course not; but Gerty, you will shake hands with me?' holding out her hand and taking Gerty's in hers.

'I am not surprised to see you; I knew you were here!'

'Knew I was in London?' interrupting her; 'how, Gerty?'

'I saw you at the Academy on Wednesday.'

Rose's heart fell, and but for the artificial red on her cheeks they would have looked deadly pale. Had Gerty seen her behaviour *to* her husband, and *with* M. le Nord?

'Ah!' with an affected shrug but an inward tremor, 'what a day that was. Sir Everard was nearly killed—run over in the street. I've scarcely recovered it yet. But, Gerty, you must see my baby—nay, you won't refuse. He is such a pet! Come—do, the carriage is at the door. How funny to think of me showing you my son—the little son and heir, you know; finish your orders and come, there's a dear. For the sake of "auld lang syne," come, Gerty.'

There was a quiver in Rose's voice which did not escape Gerty's quick ear. She *seemed* to have forgotten the mournful past in which she had played so false a part, to ignore the pain it must be costing Fred's sister to see her again, to forget conveniently, in short, all that it suited herself to forget; but that she was feeling more than she chose to show, Gerty knew by the tremor in the tones of the familiar voice. Gerty, to whom Egerton had told the story of Anton's life, and the purport of his visit to his uncle this morning, hesitated. All the strong, natural impulses of her being prompted her to turn scornfully away from the woman who had wrecked her brother's happiness, and done her best to ruin her own. But gracious thoughts arose. She pitied from her heart her early friend, remembered to whom and to

whom alone 'vengeance belongeth,' and felt that in God's providence they had met, and that she might lend a helping hand to assist one who seemed already on the sliding scale. She stood silent, musing, while Rose, who secretly longed to make it up with Gerty, plied her with entreaties to come and see her child. At last she yielded, and drove with Lady Egerton to her hotel. As they entered the nursery, the child crowed, and held out his little hands to his mother. She seized him from the nurse's arms, smothered him with kisses, and then held him up for Gertrude to inspect and admire. A plainer baby Gerty thought she never in her life had seen, with his snub nose and big mouth, but there was something most engaging in his smile and his endearing little ways.

'Sir Ralph Egerton, Miss Ellerslie,' said Rose, dancing him forwards to Gerty and smiling; 'isn't he a cherub?'

It was a perplexing question.

'I don't know what a cherub is like,' answered Gerty, 'but he's not just what I fancy they are.'

'Oh, you're jealous!' cried Rose angrily; 'you thought *your* friend would come in for the baronetcy, but you see we've cut you all out; haven't we, Sir Ralph?' dancing him in her arms. 'Yes, we have. I'd give something to see his highness, Major Egerton's face, when he sees you, master babe! He's been writing Sir Everard continually—I suppose it's about his disappointment. I know his handwriting. *I've* had letters from him, Gerty, too; what a flirt he is!'

Before Gerty could reply, the nurse came forward and said, 'Sir Everard has sent to know if you are disengaged, as Major Egerton, who is calling, would like to see your ladyship.'

'Major Egerton! is he here? Mercy! let us go at once; I'll just take you too, Sir Ralph, and introduce you,' smoothing his dress. 'No time like the present; come, Gerty, you'll not be sorry to see the Major, will you?'

She led the way; and just as Egerton was preparing to leave Sir Everard's room to go to her drawing-room to meet Lady

Egerton, the door, as we have said, opened, and with her baby in her arms she entered.

Having greeted Egerton, and introduced Gerty to Sir Everard, who started at the sight of the 'run-over gentleman,' Rose held up her baby, and with an almost fiendish smile on her beautiful face, exclaimed, 'And let me also, Major Egerton, introduce to you, Ralph, presumptive Sir Ralph Egerton of Kalme.'

It was to her a moment, but only a moment, of victory, and to Egerton it was the moment, the crisis, which in anticipation he had many times rehearsed, but the full pain and difficulty of which he had never, of course, realized.

'Well, what do you think of your—y—our rival cousin, the young baronet?' at last she exclaimed, amazed at Egerton's silence, while Sir Everard made for the door.

'Poor little man!' Egerton began, as he looked kindly at the ridiculously dressed small personage.

'Poor little man, indeed!' Rose burst out; but Egerton went steadily on: 'I wish him health and grace from my heart; but he is *not* the young baronet, even if my uncle were dead and gone. By my uncle's former marriage he had a son—Anton Berkeley Egerton. *He* is heir to Sir Everard's title and estates.'

Had the ground opened under her feet, Lady Egerton could not have been more stunned than by the words now uttered by the man, to avenge herself on whom had been one of the great incentives to her marriage. Her heart sank. She knew Egerton was the last to exaggerate or threaten. There was absolute fact, she felt, in each crushing word he had spoken. But what an affront, an insult, had been done to her! She shook with passion, then burst out in wild invective against him, Sir Everard, and her cruel fate. She threw out dark hints of contesting the claim, securing *her* boy's rights, and defending him against this upstart.

Egerton suffered her to rage on without a word of interruption, and when at last she paused, he told her rapidly the

simple facts of the case. Then again the storm burst. She was a pitiable sight indeed,—her eyes flashing almost to madness, her proud, erect figure defiant in its attitude, while the uncontrolled words of passion fell fast from her trembling lips.

Gertrude, horrified, distressed, moved towards the door. She ought not, she felt, to be witness of such a scene. But Rose screamed after her to stay, to help to defend her against this cruel, unjust man, who, in a manner so unworthy of a gentleman, of a soldier, was, by his interference, ruining her own and her child's prospects.

'You know you are speaking falsely,' said Gertrude; 'Major Egerton has acted like himself in all he has done.'

Egerton placed a chair for Gertrude. His look spoke his thanks, while the glance Gerty cast on him fell on his heart in this terrible storm like a warm ray of sunshine.

'Yes! yes! you are all against me,' exclaimed Rose, on whom these loving glances were not lost, and whose jealousy at the evident happy understanding between the two leapt up within her like a flame of fire. 'Well, well! you'll not have me long. I wouldn't *live* after all this, Major Egerton, so you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have killed me. Gerty,' as she suddenly wheeled round and placed the baby in her arms, 'be kind to *him* when I'm gone!' and as she spoke, she swept out of the room.

'Go after her,' said Gertrude to Egerton, in her alarm and anxiety, 'she will certainly do herself harm!'

'No fear,' said Egerton, hastening to her side, anxious as to the effect upon her of such an exciting scene. 'She'll not singe a hair of her head; she's a coward at heart, as all these bravadoes are.'

Gertrude breathed freely, then said, 'What can we do to help, to save her?'

'My hope, humanly speaking, is in you, Gertrude. Go to her, and talk to her in your own true, downright, but most tender way. Try to bring her mind to some sense of her duty to her husband; make her see what a splendid oppor-

tunity is now given her of regaining Sir Everard's affections by a generous acquiescence in the inevitable, and by her readiness to take the blessings which yet remain to her, while forced to give up some to another.'

'I doubt if I can,' said Gerty.

'It is the last hope of my heart for her!' said Egerton; 'with God's blessing, you may succeed.'

'I will try if you wish me,' said Gerty, with a radiant look, as already she felt the sweetness of making this effort by *his* request, and with his love and strength to back her up.

'I am *not* afraid of anything she may do to herself,' said Egerton, as Gerty rose to go. 'I *am* afraid of a M. le Nord, who, my uncle's agent tells me, visits her against his will! Now I must fetch Anton to see his father. God will bless and help you, darling.' He pressed her in his arms, then each went to their share in a work which angels would have loved to do.

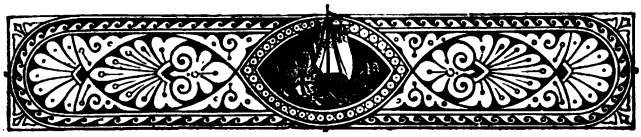
Gerty hastened to Lady Egerton's room with the now sleeping baby in her arms. 'Her ladyship is in the drawing-room,' said the nurse, as she took the child; then with a curl on her lip, and a significant tone in her voice, she added, 'She'll not be up-stairs again for a good hour at least, Miss. M. le Nord is with her.'

Gerty went straight to the drawing-room. Rose, who was talking volubly as she entered, started and ceased. M. le Nord stood beside her, in the attitude of rapt attention.

'Well?' to Gerty, without rising, or without naming her to her visitor.

'I want you to come home with me,' said Gerty. 'You are not well, Rose, to-day; and you will have an hour's quiet at Brook Street, and me to nurse you.'

M. le Nord, who was struck with Gerty's appearance, glared on her, however, for her words.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

'Win straying souls;
Cast none away.'

'He is the half part of a blessed man,
Left to be finished by such as she;
And she, a fair divided excellence,
Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.'

ERTRUDE'S anxiety was intense. Her heart reached back, past all the painful scenes of the year gone by, to the early days of Rose's childhood and her own. Her gracious soul forgave the cruel injuries done, and saw in the proud, disappointed woman a sister, a fellow-sinner, on the horrible brink of a downward course.

To snatch her from this, to inspire her with a hope nobler, sweeter than any that had yet influenced her life, this was now her intense longing. She threw herself into the hopeless-looking task in simple trust upon the wisdom and strength promised from above.

'I can't come,' said Rose; 'I'm engaged on business with M. le Nord. He is my best friend.'

'Lady Egerton has had an agitating morning,' said Gertrude, bowing coldly towards M. le Nord. 'I am sure if you are her friend, you will wish her to rest and be quiet.'

'A polite dismissal,' thought he, but he could not, with all his *sang froid*, find it in him to stay after it. He rose to go.

Lady Egerton looked perplexed. 'If only Gertrude would leave us for two minutes,' she thought. But Gertrude was not

to be driven from her post. She stayed until the defeated Frenchman had at last to bow himself out of the room.

Rose's rage and excitement at the announcement of Anton's existence continued terrible. Gertrude dared not leave her alone. In spite of Harry's assertion to the contrary, she feared she might injure herself. This man, too, might return, nay, certainly would return, when she was gone. She must get Rose away, and soothe her, and try to bring her to some calmer state of mind before she should meet Sir Everard. Gradually her passion began to expend itself, and from pacing wildly up and down the room, and muttering all manner of threats, she threw herself on the couch and groaned terribly.

'You will come with me for a little while?' said Gerty, not knowing what the next move in this complicated drama might be, but feeling that the present moment and its duty alone were hers. She knelt down beside Rose, taking her fevered hand in hers.

'To think of such deception! I wonder what your father would say. *He* would take my part, I believe!' starting up. 'Ah but,' falling back among the cushions again, 'perhaps he won't see me after—poor Fred—my conduct, Gerty,' in a half-appealing, mournful tone, and not daring to meet Gerty's eye.

'He knows nothing of it,' said Gerty, in a tone of deep pathos. 'Fred never spoke of it to him!'

'Did he not? But you?'

'I—oh—no!' with a tremble in her voice.

'Gerty,' moved to admiration, 'you *are* kind and generous!'

'Will your husband not miss you for a little?'

'Miss *me?*' with a haughty toss of her head. 'He doesn't care where I go nor how I spend my time.'

'How do you know?' asked Gerty simply, as Rose, having roused herself, prepared to go with her.

'How do I *not* know?' answered Rose as they set off to walk to Brook Street; 'he never asks me to drive with

him; won't come to balls and places; forbids me,—would you believe it?—forbids *me* to go because *he* can't!'

'I can't imagine what *pleasure* women find going to places their husbands don't go to!'

'Oh but, if you had an *old* husband, you would soon tire of that kind of logic.'

'Never!'

'But you would. It's not to be borne.'

'I would rather have my husband's good opinion than that of all others in the world.'

'Oh yes, you have it for a while, but you lose it very soon!'

'*I* should count it the happiness of my life, not to speak of duty, to *keep* it!'

'Ah yes, but not an old, jealous-tempered man like Sir Everard!'

'*Whoever* and *whatever* he is, you have *promised*, Rose, *promised* God and him, to be a faithful, loving, and obedient wife. That is your part. Have you ever tried to be this?'

'Well, but every one says he is so old a—nd m—ean!'

'He is one of the most distinguished-looking men I ever saw,' said Gerty heartily.

'Do you think so?' brightening a little. 'Well, M. le Nord says'—

'What has M. le Nord to do with you and your private domestic affairs?' cried Gerty, her eyes flashing with indignation.

Rose was silent.

Just then a lady in a well-appointed victoria, and dressed in a very *prononcé* style, drove past. She bowed. Rose returned the courtesy. Gerty looked straight before her.

'Don't you know Mrs. Jones Flouncing?' asked Rose. 'She looked hard at you.'

'Papa and Aunt Dorothy don't wish me to know her,' Gerty replied. 'She has tried to pay me attention, but I can't, of course, receive it.'

'What's the matter with her, pray?'

'She goes about with Mr. Freeman of the —— Regiment, and her husband doesn't like it. I don't choose to know such people.'

The words told on Rose, though she did not speak. If her friends knew of all *her* goings and doings, would they not forbid Gerty to go about with *her?* The opinion of society on such conduct, as revealed to her in the case of another, made an impression upon her.

Aunt Dorothy received Lady Egerton warmly. Colonel Ellerslie did not think her improved, quite the reverse; her dress was too rich for her age, altogether she had an extravagant look about her, which offended his good taste; but he welcomed her in his stately fashion. Soon she began to tell to him her tale of sorrow; and if she utterly failed to enlist either his judgment or his sympathy on her behalf, she was sufficiently interested to stay at Brook Street until Egerton appeared, and Gertrude again breathed freely.

Meanwhile Egerton had posted off for Anton. The boy had known, ever since he was old enough to understand it, the story of his birth and circumstances, and Cousin Harry had prepared him for the interview which was now at hand. Little was said by either of them as they drove to the hotel; their hearts were too full for words, but each was strong in the love and sympathy of the other, and in the consciousness of God's overruling providence in the minutest details of their lives.

The afternoon was far advanced when they arrived. Sir Everard was alone when Egerton, followed by Anton, entered the room.

'Ah, you have found him, Harry!' exclaimed his uncle, as he hastened forward to meet and welcome Anton. 'Why have you been so long of coming, young man? Sit down, sit down here,' making him come in front of him. 'Now let me look at you,' as he fixed his eyes intently upon Anton, who, in his turn, was astonished beyond words. He scanned his features and his height; and Anton's open, intelligent face and well-knit frame, together with his perfect breeding, stood the

scrutiny of the curious old gentleman. 'A soldier every inch of him!' he at last exclaimed; and if Anton only had known it, this was the highest praise he could have had.

'And now let me thank you again for your gallant rescue. At the risk of his own life, Harry,' turning to Egerton, who was a surprised spectator of the scene, 'this boy, this gallant youth, saved me from a horrible death! I owe you no ordinary debt of gratitude. Your name—your address—in case I should let you go without it again, and you should forget to come back?'

'Anton Berkeley Egerton,' came instantly in ringing clearness.

Sir Everard started, passed his hand over his brow as if to clear his ideas, and turned with piercingly inquiring eyes to Harry. How often do events which have taken years to evolve concentrate themselves in their crisis on a single moment!

'Yes,' said Egerton, 'this is Anton,' coming up to him and putting his hand protectingly on his shoulder; 'and this, Anton, is your father. May you be blessings and comforts to one another, as in God's providence you are meant to be. You will have much to say to one another, and it will be best said alone;' and grasping first one and then the other by the hand, he left them to this their first strange talk with one another.

At Brook Street, whither he hastened, he found Lady Egerton. He recounted to her and Gertrude the details of the interview which he had just witnessed. He neither besought Lady Egerton to be calm, nor advised her to receive Anton quietly, if not graciously, but spoke of him as even now in his rightful place, and a member of his father's household.

'There need not be any formal announcement to the outside world,' he went on, in a way meant to be reassuring to Rose. 'He will be introduced to family friends, and on Sir Everard must fall the pain and onus of explanations. With you, Lady Egerton, no particle of blame in this concealment lies; and if I can bespeak your forbearance for Sir Everard, and your generous forgiveness of the deceit he has practised upon you,

it will go far to make Anton's new life, poor boy, a comfortable one.'

Not a hint that he knew of their domestic misery, not an intrusive word of counsel as to how she should conduct herself to her husband, only this appeal to *her* to make Anton happy.

The faintest glimmer of a new hope stirred the pulses of her being as he ceased. It would be a new spring of attractiveness on her part, and not a contemptible one either. Should she be capable of such generous conduct in so trying a crisis as the present, what a triumph it would be to compel admiration from those two noble beings before her! Far be it from us to say her motive was a pure one, but surely its bias was in a better line.

For the next few weeks, all unconsciously to the objects of their interest, Gertrude and Egerton continued their efforts to lead Rose to right reflection and resolve, and to bring about a happier state of matters between her and Sir Everard. Anton returned to school, and Rose was alternately relenting and retaliating. Her talks with Gerty impressed her, while Major Egerton's kindness to herself and Sir Everard touched a long-dormant chord in her heart.

A wild tumult raged within her on learning the actual state of matters between Egerton and Gerty, and a feeling almost of desperation took possession of her when she contrasted their lives and their ardent affection and esteem for each other with her own disappointed and dreary lot. It was just at such times that M. le Nord would appear and insert his poison into her mind, and no persuasions on Gertrude's part could prevail upon her to forbid his visits. He timed his visits when Sir Everard was at his club, or shut up by indisposition in his room; but Gertrude appeared at these times also, trying to counteract, by her inspiriting words, without openly railing against him, the evil influences of this man.

Sir Everard had intended remaining in London during the whole season, but suddenly he changed his mind. He longed to see Kalme, and to have all in readiness for Anton's home-coming in the holidays.

A new fresh love was in his heart for the boy. He was proud of him, repentant in his feelings towards him, full of hope in the prospect of having him with him in the coming weeks, full of anticipation and interest for his future. But Rose felt herself aggrieved by the arrangement; *her* pleasure was set aside. She was still in the whirl of a London season, and she was to be dragged from it to the wilds of a country life, shorn, too, of the glory which had irradiated it when she believed Kalme to be *hers* and *her* boy's. But *her* wishes were henceforth, it appeared, to be ignored, and she was to drag out a weary existence with a jealous old man and a big step-son in a backwood sort of country place!

She had been struggling to be better, she said to herself, to be nicer to her husband, and to bring herself to look more calmly on her blighted life, but this foretaste of her monotonous, loveless future, with its prospective train of to-be-set-asidenesses, was too intolerable. Her spirit chafed under it. The late hours she kept, and the excitement of M. le Nord's visits, seemed to choke out any buddings of a better life. Her baby was the one ray of light in this night of darkness, the little loadstone which weighted her frivolous, uncontrolled spirit, and kept her from flying into the wildest folly. To her child she went first in the morning and last at night. Over its quaint little face she wept the most passionate tears, and into its irresponsive ear she uttered the breathings of a chafed spirit. It was a blessed outlet for the pent-up feelings of her proud, rebellious heart.

And now the last day of their stay in London has come, and this ill-assorted little family is to start next morning for Kalme. Egerton spent the day with his uncle, going over with him all the plans and arrangements for his permanent residence on his estate.

'I am sick of this life, Harry,' he said sadly, as they finished their business; 'but for Anton, sick of life itself. What a ravelled concern mine has been; and but for you, what a dismal night would have been before me! But that boy has

put some new hope into my heart, and I trust to live long enough to put things straight for him. What I owe you is untellable. How you have smoothed things, and got it announced, and everything! Harry, my blessing is worth nothing, but God Almighty will bless you. And if it is any comfort to you to know it, I am reading my Bible, and trying to follow in some of the ways which have made you the good and great man you are. We must have talks about these things when you come to Kalme.' He stretched out his hand. Egerton grasped it warmly. 'You have promised,' he went on, 'to bring your bride, your fair, good, beautiful bride, Harry, to Kalme. Her influence over Lady Egerton is wonderful; she is my hope for her!'

Lady Egerton spent the day restlessly and excitedly. A terrible conflict raged within her—the conflict not between right and wrong, but between duty and pleasure. A crisis between M. le Nord and herself was now reached. She was leaving London, with its convenience for stolen interviews, and was on the brink of banishment to a miserable, lonely life. So he had painted her inevitable future with Sir Everard. Besides, she was tired of her life, even this life of luxury and rank to which she had looked forward as to the goal of bliss. Her heart was craving for sympathy and love, and she chafed under what she called her 'golden chains.' M. le Nord seized and availed himself of all her varying moods, and had succeeded at last in bringing her to face the alternative of a buried-alive existence, lonely-hearted, unloved, neglected, or a life of freedom and love, and communion of soul with himself, flinging to the winds all consideration of right and wrong, of honour or of dishonour. And such a state of mind, such worldliness and God-forgetfulness, makes its victim selfish, and in its desperate pursuit of its own pleasure, heartless, soulless! For himself, he assured her that his existence was bound up in her; that without her he was a lost, a hopeless man; that he would leave the country if she refused to link her fate with his—leave the world itself!

Gertrude never left Lady Egerton all this day. 'Once get her out of London,' Egerton said to Gerty, 'with her child beside her, and a hundred miles between her and that scoundrel, and there is everything to hope.'

Mrs. Heywood, who had been a sort of exile from Sir Everard's presence ever since the appearance of her paragraph in the *Times*, was reinstated into partial favour, and invited to visit them at Kalme. Her espionage would be invaluable.

Late in the afternoon M. le Nord called. It was a curious fact that nowhere was this man met in society. He did not appear to have the *entrée* into fashionable circles.

Gertrude was, as usual, with Lady Egerton when he was announced. He seemed flushed and troubled, talked rapidly on the topics of the day, and, with assumed *nonchalance*, on her ladyship's charming and lively prospects at her romantic country seat. She would, of course, have relays of honoured guests during the season. How they were to be envied! and what an honour she was conferring upon the whole neighbourhood by condescending to bury herself alive in such an out-of-the-world place!

'Sir Everard says we can't have people to stay with us till he is stronger,' answered Rose. 'Ah yes!' she added, with a sarcastic laugh, 'Anton is coming, of course; probably a troop of school-fellows will accompany *him*.'

'I am sure not,' said Gertrude, indignant at the impertinent insinuations this man presumed to make, so destructive of all the hopeful prospects she had been holding up before Rose. 'Anton is much too considerate to wish any such thing in the present state of his father's health; and he will ride with you, Rose. He is a capital horseman, and Sir Everard has got such a beauty of a mare for you. I think it will do you ever so much good after all your gaiety here.'

'Gaiety indeed! I wish every one led as quiet a life as I have done.'

'When one is the "Queen of Beauty,"' said M. le Nord, 'one must pay penalties.'

His visit was a protracted one, yet though he lingered Gertrude lingered too. At last his patience gave way. One word he must and should have alone with Lady Egerton. But no hints of Rose to Gerty to go and see baby, who was ailing to-day; no suggested pretext to look for the key of her dressing-case, which was missing; no, nothing would drive her from her post. 'This one day,' Gerty kept saying to herself, 'this one day may be the hinge on which the door of hope for Rose's future life may turn. O God!' she prayed in her heart, 'help us, save her!'

At last M. le Nord felt he *must* go. He rose. Gertrude rose, her heart beating lest even yet this man should outwit her, and moved towards the bell.

'Ah, I have forgotten to give you the name of that Italian *canzonetta* you wished!' he suddenly exclaimed, gazing at Lady Egerton.

Hastily taking out his pocket-book, he wrote a few words on a page, tore it out, and handed it to her. She snatched it eagerly. Then bidding her 'Adieu,' and bowing gracefully to Gertrude, he at last took himself out of the room.

Rose, having read the words, flung herself on a couch, and closed her eyes. Gertrude knelt gently beside her. 'What is the song?' she asked, as she lifted the scrap of paper. Rose did not hear or heed her, and Gerty read—

'Mademoiselle Lafleur is in town. She will peach to Sir Everard. All is ready. I shall be at the door in a carriage at eleven to-night. Bring only money and jewels. Fly with me to freedom and to bliss!'

As Gerty read, a cold shiver went through her, and a great cry went up from her heart for guidance and help. She had promised, or, more strictly speaking, had invited herself to stay this last evening with her friends. Egerton was obliged to keep an appointment with a military friend, and had run down for an hour to Clapham.

As suddenly as she had thrown herself down on the sofa, Lady Egerton rose. Gertrude, by this time, was at the

farther end of the room, writing or meaning to write, for her mind was ill at ease.

'I must see after this song!' Rose exclaimed, as she left the room, holding in her hand the crumpled slip of paper. She hastened to her room, and locking herself in, commenced arranging and re-arranging her things. Then, faint and jaded, she swallowed a quantity of brandy from a bottle, which, with a few articles of dress, she packed in a small travelling valise. Her jewel-case was next filled and locked; but everything about the room was left as usual, that her maid, when dressing her for dinner, might have no suspicion excited. Before summoning her, however, she unlocked the door, and flew to her child's room. The little thing crowed and smiled when she appeared, and taking him in her arms, she sat down with him, caressing him passionately. She was terribly excited; and when her maid found her here, and told her ladyship it was within twenty minutes of the dinner-hour, it was with difficulty she could control herself; at last she laid her baby in his little cot, and not daring to trust herself to a last look, she left the room. At dinner, Sir Everard remarked, in complimentary terms, on her brilliant colour and looks, and said he hoped the early start next morning, and the long journey to Kalme, would not over-tire her. 'If only he would speak sharply to me!' she thought, as she swallowed one glassful of wine after another.

'And Harry and Miss Ellerslie have promised that their first visit after their marriage shall be to us,' said Sir Everard, who seemed better this evening than usual. He looked so handsome, too, and was in such unusual spirits at the prospect of 'going home!'

'*What* a happy lot is in store for you, Gerty!' Rose said, as they sat together in the drawing-room. 'How proud Major Egerton is of you! And you never rouge nor powder, nor anything!' And she gazed at the dazzling face before her, flushed, as it was, with anxiety about her friend.

Then they sat silent together. Gertrude did not dare to hint her fears; it would only, she knew, drive Rose to some desperate act, but her heart beat terribly as the moments flew past.

'The carriage for Miss Ellerslie,' said Banks, coming into the drawing-room at ten o'clock.

Gerty started, and gazed in a fever of anxiety into Rose's face. What should she do? what should she *not* do? She felt that in answer to her prayers she would be guided aright.

Rose awoke from the muse into which she had fallen, and exclaimed, 'Going, Gerty? Yes, you must. Thank you for your goodness, your kindness, my dear sweet friend. Good-night, good-night!'

Gerty hurried out of the room, but not out of the hotel. She flew to little Ralph's nursery. The child was sleeping, and his nurse had gone to spend the evening, as usual, in the housekeeper's room. From the nursery, Gerty, unobserved, ould watch Rose's movements. Presently she appeared, and entering her room, remained there till it wanted three minutes of eleven. Then she came out in a travelling-dress, with a thick veil over her face. She carried in her hand the valise and her jewel-case. All was quiet, and closing the door behind her, she darted towards her child's room, then pausing turned, and clasping her hands in an agony of distress, she stole noiselessly down the private staircase towards the hall. Quick as thought, Gerty lifted the sleeping child, and flew with him in her arms down a side-staircase which communicated with the private one half-way down. She reached the landing-place a second after Rose appeared. Only a dim lamp burned; no one was near, not a sound stirred the strange stillness. The next moment, Rose's child was in her arms! It opened its eyes, looked up with a smile, which broke down its mother's hard heart, then nestling in her arms, closed its eyes peacefully upon her breast.

Rose bent her head over her darling, so mysteriously,—to her

fevered imagination,—so invisibly brought to her. His cheek cooled her burning one; his innocent breath mingled with that from her polluted heart, and seemed to inspire a better impulse within her; his little hand clutched hers, and held her, kept her, back—from ruin. Slowly, with this little ministering spirit in her arms, she retraced her steps—rescued—saved!

The great topic of news next morning in the metropolis was the capture of a 'gentleman swindler,' who for months past had been 'wanted' by the police, and for the discovery of whom a handsome reward had been offered. He had carried on such a skilful system of deception, uttering false bills, that the proverbially sharp London detectives had begun almost to despair of ever laying hands upon him. Among a number of *aliases* by which he had been known, that of M. le Nord appeared! 'He was nobbled,' so ran the article in the leading journal on the subject, 'by a cabby who by his orders drove him last night, in a hired carriage and pair, to the door of a hotel. He expected to be joined there, he told the man, by a wealthy friend. The friend, however, failed to appear, and the man demanded his fare. Some altercation arose, the "gentleman" seemed short of funds, and the suspicions of cabby were aroused. Instead, therefore, of driving him to the address next given, on leaving the door of the hotel he took him straight to the nearest police station.'

This, and the further details of the affair, Lady Egerton had handed to her to read in the railway carriage on their way to Kalme by Sir Everard! She had been ill all night and morning, and had greatly alarmed him by the fainting fits into which she fell again and again. But for her own earnest entreaty that they should proceed on their journey to-day, he would have put it off and got immediate medical advice. During the journey she was terribly hysterical and ill, while each time the guard opened the carriage door she started and trembled violently. Arrived at Kalme, she was lifted from the carriage and carried in a scarcely conscious state to her room. What a different entrance to her domains to what

she had once proudly looked forward! 'Oh, let me die!' she groaned, as she lay down in bed and closed her weary eyes. And for several days it seemed as if she must. Her mother watched by her in an agony of grief, listening to the ravings of her fevered brain, fearful of leaving her lest the nurse should hear words too full of suspicious remorse for any but her painfully conscious mother's ears to catch. Sir Everard was in despair, blaming himself for the deceit he had practised towards her, and for the blow which the discovery of it had given to her pride and hope; resolving, should she be restored, to make as far as in him lay *l'amende honorable.*

At last the crisis in the fever came. It was safely passed.

'She will live,' the doctor said.

Major Egerton, during this critical time, had come and gone repeatedly to Kalme, and by his presence and cheerful hopefulness had greatly comforted Sir Everard in his real distress. And now that all fear was past, and that poor Lady Egerton had 'only to get strong again,' the fulfilment of his own ardent wishes took place. It was settled that Gertrude should be married from Brook Street; her father was still too much of an invalid to travel home; and the comfort of Aunt Dorothy's presence and management was immense. The wedding party was select and small, a few only of their intimate friends being invited. The crowning joy to Gertrude's heart was the presence of Cousin Helen. She hurried her return home from Switzerland to be in time, and added the last drop of joy to Gertrude's full cup. Perhaps, however, the most perfectly satisfied and delighted heart on the occasion was Anton's. How it had all come about he was not sufficiently versed in the evolution of events to understand, but that the two beings he most loved on earth should thus be united, that the 'beautiful Miss Ellerslie' should become his 'Cousin Gerty,' and that Cousin Harry should henceforth stay at home!—it was all at first like the wildest dream, but on the wedding-day 'was turned into right good earnest.'

'But for Anton,' whispered Gertrude softly into Harry's ear as they noticed his radiant face and exuberant spirits, 'what might *not* have been!' In her white dress, and with a flush on her soft cheek, Gertrude plighted her faith to him to whom, as she said, 'she owed everything,' and who had won the deep, true love of her ardent heart.

And he! It seemed to him, as he clasped her hand and promised 'to care, comfort, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health,' that he was receiving from his God into his keeping the best jewel in all His earth. With God's blessing on their heads, and the blessing and love of father and friends,—with His grace in their hearts, and the fervent hope that together their lives should be spent in His sweet service, —they entered into the blissful estate of married life.

. . . . . .

It is a crisp October evening. The leaves on the fine chestnuts and limes in the long avenue at Kalme are falling fast, the sky is in a rich ruddy glow, and the hum of country sounds alone breaks the perfect stillness of the air. Lady Egerton is sitting at work in the large, well-lighted drawing-room. On the rug by the bright fire little Ralph is playing. Sir Everard is writing at a small table. But every now and then both parents are interrupted by crowing sounds from the young gentleman on the rug, who looks archly up, as if inviting their attention to his important occupation and performances among his picture-books and toys.

Suddenly the door opens, and Anton flies in, exclaiming:

'Here they are! I hear the carriage wheels; they're coming up the avenue!'

Sir Everard rises; Lady Egerton changes colour, lifts her child wearily in her arms, while Sir Everard passes his arm round her waist, and they proceed to the Hall.

All day Lady Egerton has been in a state of excitement at the mere thought of again seeing Gertrude and Major Egerton. Thankfulness is in her heart at the thought of having them, but shame, terrible shame, mingles with the gratitude; and now that

the carriage wheels are heard crushing the gravel, and the lamp-lights dance in her eye, she trembles and leans on her husband's shoulder. He presses her reassuringly to his heart, while little Ralph nestles his head upon her breast. Anton has dashed down the avenue, and is shouting his welcome. Such is the picture which greets the young couple as they step in among the lights and receive the hearty welcome which awaits them.

Lady Egerton, they see at a glance, is changed. She is pale and languid-looking, and the lustre is gone from her eyes. An almost hopeless look of sadness is over her; for the present, at least, her beauty is wrecked, and, as she herself feels, she has nothing to fall back upon! Yet the black velvet dress she wears becomes her well; while her short-cut hair, surrounded by the tiny lace cap, is charming in its simplicity. Tears which she cannot control glisten in her eyes as, having warmly welcomed Major Egerton, she turns to Gertrude and folds her in her arms. Harry's ringing tones sound delightful again in the sombre house; while Gerty, in the flush of her happiness and beauty, in the gladness of her heart, too, at the hopeful picture of returning peace to this home, looks radiant as a sunbeam. With their coming, new life and hope seem to stream into this ancient Hall. Anton bustles about, happy evidently in his home, yet only as a son in that home. His father delights in him, has pleasure and pride in him, and in the quiet of his present life ponders over, in wonder and admiration, the noble part which Harry has played in the history of his boy. Sir Everard himself has a look of rest about him such as no one ever before saw him wear.

What wonder that one and all of them welcome to their hearts and to their home Gertrude and Harry on their return from their wedding tour, as the two to whom under God they owe their present peace and their future hopes?

'What an armful this little fellow is, to be sure,' said Gerty, snatching up Ralph, who dug his fingers into her face, and scratched up her veil.

'He won't kiss any one through a veil,' said Rose; 'he can't bear them!' Simultaneously there flashed to the minds of both the vision of that terrible night when last Gertrude had held him in her arms.

In the evening, after dinner, they sat together in the luxurious drawing-room, and talked over the dreadful past.

'When I sit here,' said Rose at the close of a long, heart-stirring conversation, 'I feel as if I had no right to such a home. A perfect miracle of mercy saved me from ruin. Oh, what a time I have had! I wonder I have lived through it. When I began to get better, and not to have the awful dreams by night and the frights by day,—for often I have fancied I heard *his* step on the staircase,—I was weighed down by Sir Everard's kindness and thought about me. It really almost broke my heart, and at last I resolved to tell him all.'

'Right, Rose,' said Gerty eagerly.

'Once or twice I began, but could not go on. O Gerty! the way of transgressors *is* hard. At last I got it out. I thought Sir Everard would have sent me away, he is so proud and jealous. But no, he bore with me, forgave me, and blamed himself for hardness, pouring out at last *his* regrets about his—h—is deception. And now that we have told each other all, we are happier, and care for each other more than ever we did. I feel so grateful to him, I shall never be able to do enough for him; but it is dreary work when you have lost self-respect, and can only be grateful to your husband. And, Gerty, that boy! if only I could tell you what he is, so generous, so good, wheeling me out in my chair, not letting any one else do it, reading to me, telling me funny stories about his school life, doing everything to cheer and please me!'

'How very, very glad I am,' said Gerty.

'And I deserve ill from everybody,' Rose went on. 'I have done nothing but hurt people, and injure them. If only you knew how I tried to—t—o separate you a—nd'—

'I know it all,' said Gerty, interrupting her kindly. 'Do not excite yourself by recalling it, Rose.'

'And you know about F—red, too, and yet you have acted towards me as if I had been your best and truest friend. Gerty, you must teach me the spirit of your sweet revenge. Whatever makes you and Major Egerton the splendid beings you are?'

'Harry taught me,' said Gerty, with a bright look; 'he helped me to find the right end of my life's tangled hank, and he will help me to wind it out.'

'And *I*,' said Rose mournfully, 'started with the wrong end of mine, and in my pride and impatience have been tugging and pulling at it, till a mass of broken threads is all that is left.'

'But your life is not wound out yet,' said Gerty warmly; 'thank God for this, and that you are still young. Seize the right end of what yet remains. Ask Christ to save and help you; He will, and your life may be a grand one yet. What a sphere yours is! what opportunities it affords for a life in earnest!'

A new hope pulsed through poor Rose's heart. 'I will try,' she said mournfully; 'but I am so tired, and don't know how. You will help me, Gerty?'

'Oh, so gladly! and what leisure we shall have for talks while you are getting well!'

Just then the gentlemen enter. Egerton has letters in his hands, and darts to Gerty's side. 'For my wife!' he exclaims, giving her several.

'How proudly he utters the words,' Rose feels, and a wild, jealous pang, as she contrasts her twilight-life with their sunshiny one, seizes her heart. 'How young and handsome he looks too,' she thinks, 'and what a tender, protecting way he has with Gerty. And how old and bent Sir Everard has become,' and she watches him as he creeps into the room, and, instead of coming towards her, rolls an arm-chair beside the fire, and sits waiting impatiently for Anton and the draught-board.

Major Egerton is watching Gerty's face as she reads one of his letters which he has just put into her hands.

'Harry!' she exclaims, 'have we really got it?'

'Got what?' asks Lady Egerton.

'Harry is appointed Professor of Oriental Languages at —— College,' answered Gerty, sparkling with delight, 'the very thing we have been longing for; and in what kind and honourable terms the appointment is made!'

'Ah!' said Harry, 'Petley has a hand in it, I am sure; his brother and cousin have interest.'

Anton and Sir Everard pause in their game to hear the good news. Anton springs up delighted. 'The very post for Cousin Harry!' he exclaims; 'and what a stunning *M. le Professeur* he will make!' He, however, gets great fun out of the idea of the new professor's 'awful strictness' with 'the fellows' generally, and with, of course, himself especially, when his turn shall come to pass through his hands. 'I shall be spun to a certainty,' he cries merrily, '*I* know him—slips nothing.'

'So much nicer than a reformatory or a gaol,' says Gerty simply.

They all laugh.

'You never would have taken one of these, surely?' Lady Egerton says.

'Wouldn't we? Rather than be idle we would,' answered Gerty.

'Anywhere, together, appointed for them,' Rose thinks, as she smiles at Gerty's enthusiasm.

'My letters,' said Gerty, after this excitement was over, 'are from Lady Morell and Kate. Lady Morell is in a condition of perfect bliss with her "new, real daughter," and Bruce is the most wonderful husband and the best of sons. Dear Kate, how glad I am! She has found a haven of rest; her father is settled in the farm, his sister is keeping his house, and the whole family have joined him there.'

'Poor old tumbledown Garnlee,' said Lady Egerton sadly, in a low tone, only meant for Gerty and Egerton to hear; 'like its owners, nearly a ruin, I suppose.'

'It may be made a capital place,' said Egerton heartily, 'and no doubt will.'

'*It* may,' said Lady Egerton, while a look of despondency creeps over her face, 'and people with their lives opening fair before them will live and be useful in it; but mine is blighted —lived out before its time—useless—shrouded, I fear, in settled gloom.'

'If an old stone-and-lime house can be renewed and made sweet and fair,' said Egerton, catching from the sad tone the thoughts that are ever filling Rose's heart, 'what may not a broken and contrite heart become? The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, saith, "I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones."'

Tears glisten in Lady Egerton's eyes as she drinks in the soul-inspiring words—tears of shame and penitence, but tears also of hope.

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